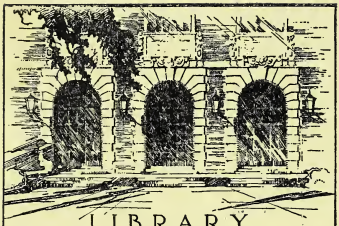
The Cabinet Minister

A. W. Pinero



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THE CABINET MINISTER

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THE CABINET MINISTER

A FARCE

In Four Acts

By ARTHUR W. PINERO

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

MDCCCXCII

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

It is well known that Mr. Pinero holds decided views of his own as to the nature and function of farce; indeed, he claims for it a wider scope and a more comprehensive purpose than have ever been associated with farce of the old Adelphi type, or the more modern genus of the Palais Royal. He has openly expressed his opinion that farce must gradually become the modern equivalent of comedy, since the present being an age of sentiment rather than of manners, the comic playwright must of necessity seek his humour in the exaggeration of sentiment. Thus Mr. Pinero holds that farce should treat of probable people placed in possible circumstances, but regarded from a point of view which exaggerates their sentiments and magnifies their foibles. In this light it is permitted to this class of play, not only to deal with

ridiculous incongruities of incident and character, but to satirise society, and to wring laughter from those possible distresses of life which might trace their origin to fallacies of feeling and extravagances of motive.

"The Cabinet Minister" is the latest of Mr. Pinero's series of farces, and it may be regarded as the direct development of ideas which he began to put into practice when he wrote "The Magistrate." Since then these ideas have undergone a process of gradual evolution, which may be clearly traced through the successive productions of "The Schoolmistress," "Dandy Dick," and "The Cabinet Minister," in each of which it will be seen that the author has aimed less at the exposition of a plot than at the satirising of particular types of character in a possible social atmosphere.

"The Cabinet Minister" was written early in 1889, and produced by Mrs. John Wood and Mr. Arthur Chudleigh at the Court Theatre, on April 23, 1890.

The following is a copy of the Programme :—

ROYAL COURT THEATRE.

UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF MRS. JOHN WOOD.

ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23rd,

At 8 o'clock,

WILL BE ACTED FOR THE FIRST TIME

AN ORIGINAL FARCE IN FOUR ACTS, CALLED

THE CABINET MINISTER,

BY

A. W. PINERO.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS (in the GUARDS)	Mr. RICHARD SAUNDERS.
VISCOUNT ABERBROTHOCK (his Son)	* * * *
RIGHT HON. SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY, G.C.M.G., M.P. (Secretary of State for the ——— Department) . .	Mr. ARTHUR CECIL.
BROOKE TWOMBLEY (his Son)	Mr. E. ALLAN AYNESWORTH.
MACPHAIL OF BALLOCHEEVIN	Mr. BRANDON THOMAS.
MR. JOSEPH LEBANON . .	Mr. WEEDON GROSSMITH.
VALENTINE WHITE (Lady Twombley's Nephew) . .	Mr. HERBERT WARING.

MR. MITFORD* (Sir Julian's Private Secretary). . .	Mr. FRANK FARREN.
THE MUNKITTRICK . .	Mr. JOHN CLULOW.
PROBYN (A Servant) . .	Mr. ERNEST PATON.

DOWAGER COUNTESS OF DRUMDURRIS . . .	Miss R. G. LE THIÈRE.
LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART (her Daughter)	Miss ISABEL ELLISSEN.
COUNTESS OF DRUMDURRIS .	Miss EVA MOORE.
LADY TWOMBLEY . . .	Mrs. JOHN WOOD.
IMOGEN (her Daughter) . .	Miss FLORENCE TANNER.
LADY MACPHAIL . . .	Mrs. EDMUND PHELPS.
HON. MRS. GAYLUSTRE (a Young Widow trading as Mauricette et Cie., 17A, Plunkett Street, Mayfair) . .	Miss ROSINA FILIPPI.
ANGÈLE	Miss MARIANNE CALDWELL.
MISS MUNKITTRICK . .	Miss FLORENCE HARRINGTON.

ACT I.

DEBT.

At Sir JULIAN TWOMBLEY'S, *Chesterfield Gardens. May.*

ACT II.

DIFFICULTIES.

At Sir JULIAN'S *again. July.*

* *Subsequently changed to* MELTON.

ACT III.

DISASTER.

At Drumdurris Castle, Perthshire. August.

ACT IV.

DANCING.

The same place. The next day.

THE SCENERY IS DESIGNED AND PAINTED BY T. W. HALL.

The reception on the first night was of a half-hearted character, for the play had been described simply as a farce, and the audience found itself laughing at seemingly serious situations which it felt should properly provoke tears, feeling sympathetically interested in passages of sentiment one moment, only to mock at them the next, and, in fact, experiencing constant perplexity as to its emotional duties. The programme certainly said "farce" in black and white, and what could that mean but unmitigated nonsense and laughter? Yet, here was actual drama with a whimsical twist that was most surprising; here were bits of pathos which were positively comic. Could

this be farce? But happily that kind of criticism is soon forgotten whose principle is, like that of *Mr. Punch's* navvy, "Here's a stranger, let's 'eave 'alf a brick at him." The "mixed" greeting of "The Cabinet Minister" gave place to very enthusiastic receptions on succeeding nights, and, in spite of the perplexity confessed in many of the criticisms of the play, the theatre was crowded night after night, and the fashionable and political worlds flocked to the Court, many leading politicians being frequent visitors.

The season terminated on August 8, and the theatre re-opened on October 11, from which time the popularity of Mr. Pinero's play continued as great as ever. But, after 197 performances, Mrs. John Wood decided to withdraw "The Cabinet Minister" on February 14, 1891, in the very zenith of its success, while a further long run was still to be reasonably expected. This play has not yet been seen in the provinces, but Mr. Augustin Daly has arranged to produce it, with his famous company, at his theatre in New York early in the present month.

MALCOLM C. SALAMAN.

January 1892.

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

RIGHT HON. SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY, G.C.M.G., M.P., *Secretary of State for the * * * Department*

LADY TWOMBLEY

BROOKE TWOMBLEY, *their son*

IMOGEN, *their daughter*

DOWAGER COUNTESS OF DRUMDURRIS

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART, *her daughter*

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS

COUNTESS OF DRUMDURRIS

VISCOUNT ABERBROTHOCK, *their son*

LADY MACPHAIL

MACPHAIL OF BALLOCHEEVIN, *her son*

VALENTINE WHITE, *Lady Twombley's nephew*

HON. MRS. GAYLUSTRE, *trading as Mauricette et Cie., 17a Plunkett Street, Mayfair*

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON

MR. MELTON

THE MUNKITTRICK

MISS MUNKITTRICK

PROBYN

ANGÈLE

THE FIRST ACT

DEBT

THE SECOND ACT

DIFFICULTIES

THE THIRD ACT

DISASTER

THE FOURTH ACT

DANCING

THE CABINET MINISTER

THE FIRST ACT

Debt

The scene is a conservatory built and decorated in Moorish style, in the house of the Rt. Hon. Sir Julian Twombley, M.P., *Chesterfield Gardens, London. A fountain is playing, and tall palms lend their simple elegance to the elaborate Algerian magnificence of the place. The drawing-rooms are just beyond the curtained entrances. It is a May afternoon.*

Brooke Twombley, *a good-looking but insipid young man of about two-and-twenty, faultlessly dressed for the afternoon, enters, and sits dejectedly, turning over some papers.*

Brooke Twombley.

I've done it. Such an afternoon's work—what! [*Reading.*] "Schedule of the Debts of Mr. Brooke Twombley. [*Turning over sheet after sheet.*] Tradesmen. Betting Transactions. Baccarat. Miscellaneous Amusements. Sundries. Extras."

[Probyn, *a servant in powder and livery, is crossing the conservatory, when he sees* Brooke.]

PROBYN.

Oh, Mr. Brooke.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

[*Slipping the schedule into his pocket.*] Eh!

PROBYN.

I didn't know you were in, sir. Her ladyship told me to give you this, Mr. Brooke—quietly.

[*He hands* BROOKE *a letter which he has taken from his pocket.*]

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

[*Glancing at the envelope.*] The Mater. Thank you. [*A little cough is heard. He looks toward the drawing-room.*] Is anyone there?

PROBYN.

Mrs. Gaylustre, sir.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

The dressmaker! What does she want?

PROBYN.

She told Phipps, Miss Imogen's maid, sir, that she was anxious to see the effect of her ladyship's and Miss Imogen's gowns when they get back from the Drawing-Room.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

You should take her upstairs.

PROBYN.

Beg your pardon, Mr. Brooke, but we've always understood that when Mrs. Gaylustre calls in the morning she's a dressmaker, and when she calls in the afternoon she's a lady.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Oh, very well; it's awfully confusing. [PROBYN *goes out.* BROOKE *reads the letter.*] "My sweet child. For heaven's sake let me have your skeddle, or whatever you call your list of debts, directly. I'll do my best to get you out of your scrape, though *how* I can't think. I'm desperately short of money, and altogether—as my poor dear father used to say—things are as blue as old Stilton. If your pa finds out what a muddle I'm in, I fear he'll throw up public life and bury us in the country, and then good-by to my dear boy's and girl's prospects. So if I contrive to clear you once more, don't do it again, my poppet, or you'll break the heart of your loving mother, Kitty Twombley." The Mater's a brick—what! But I wonder if she has any notion how much it tots up to.

[*He places the letter upon the back of a large saddle-bag arm-chair while he takes out the schedule.*]

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Three thousand seven hundred and fifty-six, nought, two. What!

[PROBYN *enters.*]

PROBYN.

A young man wants to see you, Mr. Brooke.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Who is it?

PROBYN.

No card, sir—and rather queerly dressed. Says he has a wish to shake hands with you on the door-step.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Oh, I say! He mustn't, you know—what!

PROBYN.

I don't quite like the look of him, sir; gives the name of White—Mr. Valentine White.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Why, that's my cousin!

PROBYN.

Cousin, sir! I beg pardon.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Where is he?

[BROOKE *goes out quickly, followed by* PROBYN. *The* HON. MRS. GAYLUSTRE, *an attractive, self-possessed, mischievous-looking woman, of not more than thirty, very fashionably dressed, enters from the drawing-room.*]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

How very charming! Lady Twombley's latest fad, the Algerian conservatory. And there was a

time when a sprig of geranium on the window-sill would have contented her. [*Looking at a photograph of* LADY TWOMBLEY *upon the table.*] There she is—Kitty Twombley. In one of my gowns too. Kitty Twombley, once Kitty White, the daughter of a poor farmer down in Cleverton. Ah, when young Mr. Julian Twombley came canvassing Farmer White's vote he found you innocently scrubbing the bricks, I suppose! And now! [*With a courtesy.*] Lady Twombley, wife of a Cabinet Minister and Patroness Extraordinary of that deserving young widow, Fanny Gaylustre! [*She sits surveying the portraits upon the table.*] Ha, ha! I'll turn you all to account some fine day. Why shouldn't I finish as well as the dairy-fed daughter of a Devonshire yokel? What on earth is wrong with my bonnet? [*She puts her hand up behind her head and finds* LADY TWOMBLEY'S *letter which* BROOKE *had left on the back of the chair.*] Lady Twombley's writing. [*Reading.*] "My sweet child. For heaven's sake let me have your skeddle——" [*She sits up suddenly and devours the contents of the letter.*] Oh! [*Reading aloud.*] "I'm desperately short of money! Things are as blue as old Stilton! If your pa finds out——!" My word!

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

[*Heard speaking outside.*] My dear Valentine, why shouldn't you come in—what?

[MRS. GAYLUSTRE *creeps round in front of the table and disappears with the letter in her hand as* BROOKE *enters, dragging in* VALENTINE WHITE, *a roughly-dressed, handsome young fellow of about six-and-twenty, bronzed and bearded.*]

VALENTINE WHITE.

Now, Brooke, you know I cut away from England years ago because I couldn't endure ceremony of any kind.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

I'm not treating you with ceremony—what!

VALENTINE WHITE.

[*Looking about him.*] Phew! the atmosphere's charged with it. That fellow with his hair powdered nearly sent me running down the street like a mad dog.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Where the deuce have you been for the last six or eight years?

VALENTINE WHITE.

Where? Oh, buy a geography; call it, "Explorations of Valentine White in Search of Freedom," and there you have it.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Freedom!

VALENTINE WHITE.

Blessed freedom from forms, shams, and ceremonies of all sorts and descriptions.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Why, you left us for South Africa. Didn't South Africa satisfy you?

VALENTINE WHITE.

Satisfy me! I joined the expedition to Bangwaketsi. What were the consequences?

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Fever?

VALENTINE WHITE.

Worse. There's no ceremony about fever. No, Brooke, I was snubbed by a major in the Kalahari Desert, because I didn't dress for dinner.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Then we heard of you herding filthy cattle in Mexico.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Yes, at Durango. I enjoyed that, till some younger sons of the nobility came out and left cards at my hut. I afterwards drove a railway engine in Bolivia.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

By Jove, how awful—what! Wasn't that sufficiently beastly rough?

VALENTINE WHITE.

My dear fellow, would you believe it—I got hold of a stoker who was a decayed British baronet! The affected way in which that man shovelled on coals was unendurable. So I've come back, hopelessly wise.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Serve you right for kicking at refinement and good form and all that sort of thing. What!

VALENTINE WHITE.

[*Mimicking* BROOKE.] Varnish, and veneer, and all that sort of thing—what!

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Oh, confound you! Well, you'll dine here at a quarter to eight, Val, won't you?

VALENTINE WHITE.

Dine in Chesterfield Gardens! Thirteen courses and eight wines! Heaven forgive you, Brooke.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Look here, you shall eat on the floor with a wooden spoon.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Thank you—even your floors are too highly polished. Tell Aunt Kitty and little Imogen that I shall walk in Kensington Gardens to-morrow morning at ten.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Little Imogen! Haw, haw!

VALENTINE WHITE.

Well?

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

I think it will pretty considerably wound your susceptibilities to hear that my sister Imogen is being presented by the Mater this afternoon.

VALENTINE WHITE.

[*In horror.*] Presented!

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Presented at Court—Drawing-Room, you know.

VALENTINE WHITE.

How dare they! poor little child!

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Haw, haw! If you'll wait a few minutes you'll see an imposing display of trains and feathers. Some of them are coming on here after the ceremony to drink tea, I believe.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Trains and feathers! Good gracious, Brooke, Imogen must have grown up!

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Here's her portrait—what?

VALENTINE WHITE.

[*Staring at the portrait.*] I am right, Brooke—she *has* grown up!

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Haw!

VALENTINE WHITE.

Eight years ago she was a romp, with a frock that always had a tear in it, and a head like a cornfield in the wind. Just look at this! While I've been away they've given her a new frock and brushed her hair. What an awful change!

[PROBYN *appears at the conservatory entrance.*]

PROBYN.

Lady Euphemia Vibart.

[LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART, *a handsome, distinguished-looking, and elegantly dressed girl of about twenty, enters. She scarcely notices* VALENTINE, *who bows formally.*]

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

No one has returned yet, Brooke?

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Effie, don't you recollect Mr. White?

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Oh! how do you do? [*She shakes hands with him in an affected manner.*] We are distantly related, I remember.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Lady Euphemia, I join you in remembering the relationship—and the distance.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Oh, I don't mean that, Mr. White. At any rate, we were excellent friends many years ago when our cousin Imogen used to give us tea in her schoolroom. She will be *too* rejoiced at your return.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

[*At the window.*] Hullo, I think pa has come home.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Good-by, Lady Euphemia.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

I say, Effie, Mr. White won't stay.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

[*Indifferently.*] What a pity!

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

He has turned against civilization, you know, and has become a sort of pleasant cannibal.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

A cannibal! That is *too* interesting. Pray remain, Mr. White. My brother, Lord Drumdurris, is on duty at the Palace to-day and is coming on here. We all knew each other as children. He will be *too* delighted.

VALENTINE WHITE.

I recollect Lord Vibart, as he then was, very well. He once burnt me with a red-hot poker.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Good-humouredly, I am sure. Perhaps you have not heard that he married Lady Egidia Cardelloe, Lord Struddock's second daughter, about two years ago. If you stay you will meet her also.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Ah, I am afraid I—I——

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

You will find her *too* enchanting.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

No, he won't. She's not tattooed or anything.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

They have a little son, just five months old, who is *too* divine.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Ah, now, if you boiled the baby it might be to Val's taste.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

As they have been constantly travelling, Egidia is

only just presented to-day by my mother. You recollect Lady Drumdurris, my mother?

VALENTINE WHITE.

Perfectly.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

[*Poking* VALENTINE *in the side.*] Old Lady Drum!

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

My mother will be *too* charmed to meet you again.

[PROBYN *enters.*]

PROBYN.

[*To* BROOKE.] Sir Julian is coming into the conservatory, sir.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Pa! [PROBYN *goes out.*]

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Oh, dear Sir Julian! [*She runs out.*]

VALENTINE WHITE.

Look sharp, Brooke. Let me out.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Val, I'll tell you what. Come upstairs and smoke a cigarette in my room, and I'll bring the Mater and Imogen to you on the quiet when the people are gone.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Why, Brooke, do you think that Aunt Kitty and Imogen want a roving relative on the premises who isn't worth tuppence!

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Bosh! Look out, here's pa! He seems awfully mumpish. Come on.

[*He takes* VALENTINE *out. Directly they are gone* LADY EUPHEMIA *re-enters with* SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY, *an aristocratic but rather weak-looking man of about fifty-five, wearing his Ministerial uniform.*]

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Are you pleased to get back, uncle?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

[*Emphatically.*] Yes.

[*She places him in the arm-chair. He sinks into it with a sigh.*]

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

How is your neuralgia?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Intense. It has been so ever since——

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

[*Putting her smelling-bottle to his nose.*] Ever since?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Ever since I took Office. Thank you.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Was it a very brilliant Drawing-Room?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I think it must have been. I have been more than usually trodden upon.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Did you catch a glimpse of Aunt Kitty or of any of our people?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I *heard* Lady Twombley. What inexhaustible spirit she has! Euphemia, my dear, I confide in you. But for Lady Twombley I could never endure the badgering, the browbeating, the hackling, for which I seem especially selected.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

It's *too* unjust.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Oh, I know I am going to have a bad time in the House to-night!

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Don't dwell upon it, uncle.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Euphemia! [*He jumps up almost fiercely.*]

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Uncle Julian!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Certain members of the Opposition are going too far. They regard me as a bull in the arena. They goad me, they pierce me with questions. And then, the lack of journalistic sympathy! Look here!

[*He stealthily produces a newspaper from his pocket.*]

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

[*Reproachfully.*] Uncle Julian, you've bought a newspaper. You promised aunt you never would.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

H'm! I would have you know, Euphemia, that I have not absolutely broken my pledge to Lady Twombley. I made Harris, the coachman, purchase this. As you drive home drop it out of your carriage window.

As LADY EUPHEMIA *takes the paper from him her eyes fall upon a paragraph.*]

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Oh! do they mean you, uncle?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Without doubt.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

[*Reading.*] "The Square Peg!"

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Hush! the servant!

[LADY EUPHEMIA *crams the paper into her pocket.* PROBYN *enters, carrying a small music-easel with some music on it and a flute in a case.*]

PROBYN.

Here, Sir Julian?

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Oh, do play, uncle!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

[*To* PROBYN.] Thank you.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

It will soothe you.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

[*Taking the flute from* PROBYN.] My only vice, Euphemia. [PROBYN *goes out.* SIR JULIAN *sounds a mournful note.*] This little friend has inspired some of my most conspicuous oratorical triumphs. It has furnished me with many a cutting rejoinder for question time. [*He sounds another note.*] Ah, I know I am going to have such a bad night in the House.

[*He plays.* MRS. GAYLUSTRE *enters with* BROOKE.]

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

[*To herself.*] That woman!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*To* LADY EUPHEMIA.] How do you do?

[LADY EUPHEMIA *stares, inclines her head slightly, and goes to* BROOKE.]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*To herself.*] Haughty wretch!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Mrs. Gaylustre!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Oh, Sir Julian, don't, don't stop!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I thought I was alone with Lady Euphemia.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

I am waiting to see dear Lady Twombley. Oh, do permit me to hear that sweet instrument!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Pray sit down!

[SIR JULIAN *resumes his seat and plays a plaintive melody.* MRS. GAYLUSTRE *listens in a rapt attitude.*]

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

[*To* BROOKE.] That person is *too* odious to me.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Several people have taken her up.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Somehow, being taken up is what she suggests.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

She seems a sort of society mermaid—half a lady and half a milliner—what? Only it bothers you to know where the one leaves off and the other begins. Who is she?

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

In prehistoric days she was a Miss Lebanon. Lord Bulpitt's son, Percy Gaylustre, met her at Nice—or somewhere.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Oh, yes, and he married her—or something.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Yes, and now she's a widow—or something.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Why does the Mater encourage her?

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Because Aunt Kate is *too* good-hearted and impressionable. But, as a rule, I think Mrs. Gaylustre makes a considerable reduction to those who ask her to their parties. [MRS. GAYLUSTRE *is bending over* SIR JULIAN *and turning his music.*] Look!

[PROBYN *appears at the entrance.*]

PROBYN.

Here's Sir Julian, my lady.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Hullo, Mater!

[LADY TWOMBLEY, *a handsome, bright, good-humoured woman, dressed magnificently in Court dress, enters.* PROBYN *retires, and* SIR JULIAN *stops playing.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Kissing* BROOKE.] Well, Brooke, darling, have you wanted your mother? [*Kissing* LADY EUPHEMIA.] Effie, how sweet you look! what a dream of a bonnet! [*Nods to* MRS. GAYLUSTRE.] How d'ye do, Mrs. Gaylustre? Why, pa! [*She bends over him and*

kisses him.] You're worried—you've been playing your whistle.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Flute, Katherine.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I mean flute. It was my brother Bob who always played a whistle when the crops were poor or the lambs fell sickly.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I had not the advantage of your brother Robert's acquaintance.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Where's Imogen? Imogen!

IMOGEN.

[*Outside.*] Mamma!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Come and show yourself to pa.

[IMOGEN *enters in her Court dress, a pretty girl of about eighteen.*]

IMOGEN.

Effie, dear! Well, Brooke!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*To* SIR JULIAN.] Look at her!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Quite charming!

IMOGEN.

Well, papa, have you nothing to say to me?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

My dear, I hesitate to address such a magnificent creature.

IMOGEN.

[*Bowing to* SIR JULIAN.] Mamma, I think that gentleman wishes to be presented to me. I have no objection, if you consider him a person I ought to know.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Kissing* IMOGEN.] Ah, Julian, our sweet child!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

[*Taking* IMOGEN's hand.] My dear.

IMOGEN.

[*With dignity.*] I am pleased to make your acquaintance. I've heard you mentioned very kindly by my little friend, Imogen Twombley. Pray sit down, and I'll sit on your lap. [IMOGEN *sits on* SIR JULIAN's *knee and puts her arm round his neck.*] Oh, papa, I have been so nervous!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

I quite sympathize. I was shockingly nervous when *I* was presented.

IMOGEN.

[*Rising hastily.*] Mrs. Gaylustre—I didn't see you.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*To* BROOKE *and* LADY EUPHEMIA.] Dear old Lady Leeke, whose wheels we locked in the Park, said

she had heard Imogen's name mentioned fifty times. Mrs. Charlie Lessingham declares nothing prettier has been seen since her own first season. And it's true—that's the best of it! I saw the child make her courtesy; I was determined I would. I entered the Throne Room just before her and tumbled through anyhow, with one eye straight in front of me and the other screwed round towards my girl. There was a general shudder—it was at my squint.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I trust not, Katherine.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

When I did get through they gave me my train, as much as to say: "If this belongs to you, take it home as soon as possible." But there I stuck in the doorway, not budging an inch. I didn't care how the officials whispered, and waved, and beckoned; I stood my ground. And then, Julian, then my breath nearly went from me, for I saw her coming! Effie, it was lovely! Brooke, you would have been proud of your sister! Her cheeks were like the outside leaf of a Duchesse de Vallombrosa rose, and her eyes like two dewdrops on the top of it; and she had just enough fright in her little heart to make her feathers tremble. Then she courtesied. Ah, if she had stumbled I should have been by her side in an instant—who would have blamed me? I'm her mother!—but she didn't. No, she floated towards me—dipping, and dipping, and dipping, again and again, as smoothly and gracefully as a swan swimming backward!

[LADY TWOMBLEY *embraces* IMOGEN.]

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

I am *too* glad, Aunt Kitty.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Awfully satisfactory—what?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I remember Lady Liphook's daughter Miriam falling and rolling over in the season of '85.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Lor' how sorry I feel for anybody who isn't a mother! But, I say, there's a bit that wants taking in there. [*Pinching up the shoulder of* IMOGEN'S *dress.*] Gaylustre, you must tell your woman Antomette this won't do.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Oh, Lady Twombley—please!

[MRS. GAYLUSTRE *puts her handkerchief to her eyes.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

My dear, pray forgive me! I really forgot where we were.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*To* LADY TWOMBLEY, *with a little sob.*] You wouldn't hurt my feelings wilfully, I know.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Not for the world. But it's a little confusing, mixing up business with pleasure. Imogen, let Lady Effie and Mrs. Gaylustre hear you play your

lovely harp, but don't let the nasty thing hurt your fingers. Brooke, I want to speak to you.

[LADY EUPHEMIA *and* IMOGEN *stroll out, followed by* MRS. GAYLUSTRE.]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

[*Mournfully.*] I'll dress now, Katherine, and go down.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Lor', pa, don't speak as if you were thinking of our tomb at Kensal Green.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Competent authorities assure me there is quiet to be found in the tomb ; I anticipate nothing of that kind where I am going to-night.

[*He goes out.* LADY TWOMBLEY *watches his going, then turns to* BROOKE *sharply.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Well, have you got it?

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

My—er——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Your skeddle.

[BROOKE *hands his schedule to* LADY TWOMBLEY.]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

There's a dear boy. [*She turns over the leaves, gradually her face assumes a look of horror.*] "Total, three thousand——!"

[*She folds the schedule, puts it in her pocket, and faces* BROOKE *fiercely with her hands clenched.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

You imp! [*She boxes his right ear soundly.*]

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Mater!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

You villain! [*She boxes his left ear.*]

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Don't, Mater!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Three thousand pounds! Three thousand times I wish you had never been born! I—I—— [*She breaks down, puts her arms round* BROOKE's *neck, and cries.*] Oh, Brooke, my dear, forgive your poor mother's vile temper. I've made my Brooke's head ache. Oh, my gracious!

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Don't fret, Mater. If you're run rather low at Scott's——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Scott's, Brooke! When I creep into that bank now and ask for my pass-book I have to hold on to the edge of the counter, I feel so sick and giddy.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Oh, very well then, Mater, I can wait. Mr. Nazareth, of Burlington Street, will accommodate me for a time; a couple of bills, you know, at three and six months—what?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Speaking in a whisper.*] Brooky, Brooky, I've thought of those dreadful things for myself.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

For yourself, Mater! Why, you can always get the right side of pa.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Brooke! Brooky, I must tell you. Just now poor pa has no right side.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Mater!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

It's as much as the dear man can do to get a rattle out of his keys. For a long time, Brooke, we've all been outrunning the constable.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Really, Mater, I ought to have been consulted before.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I know, Brooke, but I couldn't face my boy's reproaches.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Pa must have been inexcusably reckless—what?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

No, it's all my fault, every bit of it. [*A pretty melody on the harp is heard.*] Brooke, never marry a country-bred girl as your pa did. When he fell in love with me I was content with three frocks a year—think of that!—and had to twist up my own hats. And I could have done it for ever

down at Cleverton, but I didn't stand the transplanting. Oh, I'll never forget how the fine folks snubbed me and sneered at me when I came to town. Brooke, my son, I declare to goodness that for ten long years I never saw a nose that wasn't turned up! And then pa got his baronetcy, and old Lady Drumdurris gave us her forefinger to shake, and that did it. But it was too late; I was spoilt by that time. I had been too long fishing for friends with dances, and dinners, and drags, and race-parties, and all sorts of bait; and when the time came for a few people to like me for my own stupid, rough self I'd got into the way of scattering sovereigns as freely as I used to sprinkle mignonette seed in my little garden at the Yale Farm.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

All this is very painful, Mater—what?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Crying.*] What a silly woman I've been, Brooke!

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

We're all thoughtless at times.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

If I had but pulled in when pa's Irish rents began to dwindle!

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Why didn't you, Mater?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I don't know, but I didn't. I only prayed for

better times and ordered Gillow to refurnish the dining-room. Last season I got through eighteen thousand pounds!

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Oh!

[*She twists him round, pointing to the walls of the conservatory*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

And look! Look at this sixpenny Algerian grotto I've stuck in the middle of the house. Seven thousand four hundred and fifty this cost, not counting the hot-water pipes.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Is it paid for?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Your dear pa transferred the money for it to my account at Scott's, but I've gone and spent it on other things.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Mater!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh, my poor heart!

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Well, Mater, any assistance I can render you in this emergency——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Ah, I know. [*Seizing his hand and kissing it.*] My Brooke! my comfort!

PROBYN.

[*Outside.*] Lady Drumdurris—Dowager Lady Drumdurris.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Egidia and Aunt Dora.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Wiping her eyes.*] Your aunt mustn't see me upset. Brooke, don't think anything more of what I've told you. I've tumbled into the mud before now, but mud dries to dust and I've always managed to shake it off. Dora!

[*The* DOWAGER COUNTESS OF DRUMDURRIS *enters—a portly, rather formidable-looking lady of forty-five or fifty, in Court dress and diamonds.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Well, Dora, are you tired?

DOWAGER.

I hope I am never fatigued in doing my duty to my family, Kate. Here is poor Egidia.

[EGIDIA, COUNTESS OF DRUMDURRIS *enters—a small, serious girl, with a great deal of presence and dignity, also in Court dress.*]

EGIDIA.

How do you do, Lady Twombley?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Why, *poor* Egidia! Aren't you well, dear?

DOWAGER.

Egidia received a telegram from Scotland this morning ; her son has cut his first tooth, during her absence, painfully.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh, dear !

EGIDIA.

You also are a mother, Lady Twombley. You can sympathize with such cares as those I am now endeavouring to sustain.

[LADY EUPHEMIA *and* IMOGEN *stroll in.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Your boy is five months old, isn't he?

EGIDIA.

Fergus is precisely five months.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Well, there are two-and-twenty more teeth to come yet, you know.

EGIDIA.

Yes, I am schooling myself into that conviction. I am naturally, I hope, a woman of more than ordinary courage.

[PROBYN *appears at the entrance.*]

PROBYN.

Lord Drumdurris.

[*The* EARL OF DRUMDURRIS, *a boyish-looking officer of the Guards, in uniform, with much dignity and reserve, enters.*]

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

How do you do, Lady Twombley? Egidia.

DOWAGER.

Keith, you have further news from Scotland?

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Another telegram.

EGIDIA.

Ah!

[*She puts her hand calmly in that of the* DOWAGER.]

DOWAGER.

Tell us, my son.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Another tooth. [EGIDIA *closes her eyes. The* DOWAGER *kisses her upon the brow.*] I offered Lady Macphail and Sir Colin the use of my brougham, but they preferred coming on here in their chariot.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Lady Macphail and Sir Colin! Coming here!

DOWAGER.

[*To* LADY TWOMBLEY.] I haven't told you what I've done. Keith!

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

[*Bowing.*] Certainly.

[*He joins the others, who are talking together.*]

DOWAGER.

[*To* LADY TWOMBLEY.] I have a motive. My whole life has been one vast comprehensive motive. Lady Macphail is the little woman to whom I introduced you on the stairs at the Palace.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Well, but——

DOWAGER.

I encountered her again, and delivered a message from you begging her to come on here with Sir Colin to drink tea.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I never——

DOWAGER.

I know you didn't. My motive is this. She has just brought her boy to London.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Is he the great man in the kilt I saw holding on to her lappets?

DOWAGER.

Yes.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

He's thirty, if he's an hour.

DOWAGER.

He's more. But he is a fine example of the grand simplicity that exists in many Scottish families. Proprietor of eighty thousand acres, head of a great clan, Colin Macphail of Ballocheevin remains a child attached to his mother.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh, I shall be very happy to——

DOWAGER.

Ah, you grasp my motive!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

No, I don't.

DOWAGER.

[*In* LADY TWOMBLEY'S *ear.*] *Imogen.*

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Imogen?

DOWAGER.

Imogen *must* make a match this season and marry before the year is out.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Why?

DOWAGER.

Don't deceive yourself, Kate Twombley. You are aware that Julian's position in the Ministry is precarious?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

You think so?

DOWAGER.

Everybody thinks so. It's my opinion they'll make a Jonah of him and cast him from them before many months are over. You know what that means?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Horrible! Julian giving up public life and set-

tling down in some dismal swamp as a country gentleman. He has threatened it.

DOWAGER.

Very well then; you must assure your children's future before the blow falls. What could you do for Imogen in the country?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

A vicar or a small squire.

DOWAGER.

More likely a curate or a farmer. Will you resign yourself to that?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Never, Dora! I never will! I've had to swallow the husks of London and my chicks shall have the barley. Julian *shall* hold on till they have made brilliant marriages!

DOWAGER.

Ah!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

He shall! Afterwards I'll go back to darning stockings with a light heart.

DOWAGER.

Well spoken, Kate Twombley!

[PROBYN *appears at the entrance.*]

PROBYN.

Sir Colin and Lady Macphail.

DOWAGER.

[*To* LADY TWOMBLEY.] You see my motive?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Yes, Dora.

[LADY MACPHAIL *and* SIR COLIN *enter—she a simple little old woman in Court dress, ecstatically sentimental; he a formidable-looking bearded man about six feet high, in full Highland costume, bashful and awkward in manner, and keeping close to his mother.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*To* LADY MACPHAIL.] I am delighted to see you here.

LADY MACPHAIL.

[*Presenting* MACPHAIL.] My boy. [*He shelters himself behind her and bows uneasily.*] I have determined to give the lad a season in this mighty city, Lady Twombley.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Ah, he'll enjoy himself, I'm sure.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Nay, the Macphails never enjoy themselves in the South.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I'm very sorry; perhaps they don't go the right way about it.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Already Colin's feet ache——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Do they?

LADY MACPHAIL.

Ache to press the heather again, searching for a sight of the red-deer in the misty chasms of Ben Muchty, or the wild birds fluttering on the gray shore of Loch-na-Doich.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Ah, very pretty country, I dare say.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Where would you be, Colin, at this hour at Castle Ballocheevin? Watching the sun sink behind the black peak of Ben-na-Vrachie? Speak, lad!

MACPHAIL.

[*Sadly.*] That is so, mother.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Do you do that every evening at home?

MACPHAIL.

Aye.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Ah, a Macphail always feels like a seagull with a broken wing in the South.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

You must take care you don't get him run over.

PROBYN.

[*Appearing at the entrance.*] Tea is in the yellow room, my lady.

[DRUMDURRIS, BROOKE, EGIDIA, *and* LADY EUPHEMIA *go out.*]

DOWAGER.

[*Introducing* IMOGEN.] Lady Macphail, Sir Colin—my niece, Imogen. Imogen, take Sir Colin to tea.

IMOGEN.

This way, Sir Colin.

DOWAGER.

[*To* LADY TWOMBLEY.] You see my motive?

IMOGEN.

[*Waiting for* MACPHAIL.] Tea is in this room, Sir Colin.

MACPHAIL.

[*Looking at* IMOGEN, *and then, appealingly, at* LADY MACPHAIL.] Come, mother.

[IMOGEN, MACPHAIL, *and* LADY MACPHAIL *go out.*]

DOWAGER.

[*To* LADY TWOMBLEY, *following the others.*] He is impressed!

[SIR JULIAN, *in evening dress, enters with a letter in his hand.*]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Katherine! Katherine!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Pa?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I must speak to you.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

But Dora has just brought a Highland youth here.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I can't help it.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

What's wrong, pa? How pale and waxy you look!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

[*Handing her the letter.*] An urgent letter from old Mr. Mason, my solicitor, about my affairs.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh, Lor', pa—another!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

You have it upside down.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Everything connected with our affairs *will* get that way.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Mason is imperative.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

He insists upon your considering your pecuniary position.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

What shall I do?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Accede to his request—consider it.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

But I am constantly considering it!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Hush, pa!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

No man's pecuniary position has ever demanded or received more consideration than my own. Day and night my pecuniary position lashes my brain into the consistency of a whipped egg.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Pa, be calm!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Kate, my pecuniary position interposes between me and grave public questions. My very spectacles are toned by it. It is in every blue-book, in every page of Hansard, in the preamble of every Bill.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh, dear pa!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

It sits with me in committees, accompanies me into the lobbies; it receives deputations, replies to questions in the House; it forms part of the deliberations of the Cabinet. It warps my political sympathies; it distorts my judgment; it obscures my eloquence, and it lames my logic! [*Taking the letter*

from LADY TWOMBLEY.] And Mason—asks—me—to consider it!

[*Leans his head on his hands. She sits on the arm of his chair.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Tearfully.*] Julian, you — mustn't — give way. Suppose the members of the Opposition saw you like this.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

[*With a groan.*] Oh!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Think of those persons who sit—where is it?—on the hatchway—or below the gangway, or some uncomfortable place. How rejoiced they'd be! [*Shaking him gently.*] Have courage, Julian—perk up, pa dear.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I cannot go on, Kitty.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh, don't say that!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Mason's letter decides me.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

To do what!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Yield to a sentiment which I have reason to believe exists on both sides of the House——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Resign?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Resign my place in the Ministry—ask for the Chiltern Hundreds——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Wind up my affairs in town——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh, no!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

And seek peace in rural retirement.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

You shan't, pa! Oh, my gracious, you wouldn't be so heartless!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Heartless!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Kneeling beside him.*] Think of my blessed chicks—my babies. Don't go under, Julian, till we've given them the benefit of our magnificent position——

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Our mag——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Wait till my Brooky—our Brooky—has won some handsome, wealthy girl who is worthy of him. Hold on till Imogen has made a marriage that will make

every true mother's mouth water. Then I'll settle down with you alone, in a marsh. But don't sink into obscurity till the end of the year! I can do wonders by Christmas! Give me till then, pa—give me till then!

[*She throws her arms round his neck.* IMOGEN'S *harp is heard again.* MRS. GAYLUSTRE *enters.*]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

The wretches! how they ignore me! [*Seeing* SIR JULIAN *and* LADY TWOMBLEY.] Ah!

[*Hiding herself behind a pillar she listens.*]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

But—but—but if I desperately cling to public life a little longer I must have money.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Of course—of course you must have money. But, Julian, you must look to me for that.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

You, Katherine!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

You must think only of your value to the country, and—leave the rest to your wife.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Kitty, you have made some little private hoard out of your allowance!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Sinking faintly onto the settee.*] Well, pa.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

How prudent! How thoughtful!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Go—go to Dora. Make my excuses. I'll follow you when I've pulled myself together.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Yes, yes. [*Turning.*] By the way, Kitty, Hopwoods have just sent in their bill for erecting this conservatory.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Clinging to the back of the chair.*] Oh!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

You remember I transferred, at your request, seven thousand some odd pounds to your account at Scott's when we projected the—h'm!—pardonable little extravagance?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Y—yes.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Hopwoods can wait till midsummer. Perhaps you wouldn't mind letting me have the use of the money in the meantime?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

No, certainly not.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

A cheque any day this week——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

All days are equally convenient.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Kitty, I *will* hold on till Christmas!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Thank you, pa—I—— [*She turns to him suddenly.*] Oh, pa, I haven't got—I haven't—I——

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Haven't what, Kitty?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

N—nothing. Go—go to Dora. [*He goes out.*] Oh! where shall I turn for money? Where shall I turn? Where shall I turn—for money? [MRS. GAYLUSTRE *advances and faces* LADY TWOMBLEY.] Ah! Mrs. Gaylustre!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Oh, Lady Twombley, I am in such distress!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Distress!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*Producing* LADY TWOMBLEY'S *letter to* BROOKE. I picked up a letter in the next room. I thought it was the note you wrote me about the plum-coloured *peignoir* and that it had fallen from my pocket. I

glanced at it. Oh, look! [*She hands the letter to* LADY TWOMBLEY.]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Gracious!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

But that is not the worst. It tells me that you are in trouble—you, the best friend I have in the world, my benefactress. Oh, what shall I do?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Hold your tongue about it.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Ah! why did I read it through?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Because you were a little curious, I'm afraid.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

I shan't sleep for it.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Thank you, I can do all my own lying awake. Mind your own concerns for the future, Gaylustre.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

It *is* my concern when I can help you.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

You help me?

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Ah, yes. Oh, let me, Lady Twombley! I don't ask to be confided in, I only ask to be allowed to bring my brother to see you—to-night—to-morrow.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Your brother?

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Mr. Lebanon—my Joseph. I would trust him as I'd trust myself. I have known him do such things in the way of raising money upon what he calls personal and other security——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

A money-lender?

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Lady Twombley! Oh!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Does Mr. Lebanon help—people—in difficulties?

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Oh, doesn't he!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Will you see him, Lady Twombley?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Don't ask me. Perhaps.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

To-night?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Perhaps, I tell you.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

At what time?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Half-past nine—sharp.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*To herself.*] Done!

[SIR JULIAN *enters with* LADY MACPHAIL, MACPHAIL, *and the* DOWAGER. BROOKE *follows with* DRUMDURRIS, *then after an interval* LADY EUPHEMIA, EGIDIA, *and* IMOGEN *appear.*]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

[*To* LADY TWOMBLEY, *reprovingly.*] My dear, Lady Macphail and Sir Colin are going.

DOWAGER.

[*To* LADY TWOMBLEY.] You are neglecting them. What can be your motive?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*To* LADY MACPHAIL.] I hope Sir Julian has explained——

LADY MACPHAIL.

Certainly. But I must take my boy away. He dines at six to avoid late hours.

[IMOGEN *talks to* MACPHAIL.]

DOWAGER.

[*Quietly to* LADY TWOMBLEY.] Look! they are talking.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Colin rises at five every morning.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Dear me, how awful!

LADY MACPHAIL.

He loves to watch the sunrise from the jagged summit of Ben-na-fechan.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

But there's no Ben-na-what-you-may-call-it here.

LADY MACPHAIL.

No. But he sits upon the roof of our lodgings in Clarges Street. Good-bye, Lady Twombley.

[*They shake hands.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*To* MACPHAIL.] Good-bye. You must come and see me on one of my Tuesdays.

MACPHAIL.

Aye, with my mother.

[*He turns to* IMOGEN; *they shake hands.*]

IMOGEN.

Good-bye, Sir Colin.

DOWAGER.

[*To* LADY TWOMBLEY.] There again! look!

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Why, here's Valentine! Valentine!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Inquiringly.*] Valentine?

[BROOKE *brings on* VALENTINE.]

VALENTINE WHITE.

[*To* BROOKE.] Let me go! I was trying to find my way out.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

[*To* LADY TWOMBLEY.] Here's Valentine, come back.

IMOGEN.

Valentine!

VALENTINE WHITE.

Imogen!

IMOGEN.

Oh, my dear Val! My dear old Val!

[*She rushes to him impulsively and flings her arms round his neck, at which the* DOWAGER *gives a cry of horror, and there is a general movement of astonishment.*]

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

THE SECOND ACT.

Difficulties.

The scene is a handsomely decorated and elegantly furnished morning-room at Sir Julian Twombley's, *with every evidence of luxury and refined taste. It is a July morning.*

Sir Julian *is playing his flute.* Mr. Melton, *a good-looking, well-dressed young man, enters carrying a few sheets of paper.*

Mr. Melton.

Pardon me. [Sir Julian's *flute gives a squeak.*]

Sir Julian Twombley.

Oh, Melton?

Mr. Melton.

The arrangements for this morning are quite complete, Sir Julian.

Sir Julian Twombley.

The arrangements?

Mr. Melton.

The arrangements for the opening of the new street.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Oh, to be sure; I open the new street to-day. Why on earth shouldn't a new street be opened by a policeman during the night, quietly?

[*The* DOWAGER LADY DRUMDURRIS, *fashionably dressed for out-of-doors, enters.*]

DOWAGER.

[*In a flutter.*] Julian, good-morning. A glorious day for the ceremony, Mr. Melton. Is everything arranged?

MR. MELTON.

[*Bowing.*] Everything.

DOWAGER.

I have a motive for asking. I and my family accompany Sir Julian and Lady Twombley to lend weight and support.

MR. MELTON.

[*To* SIR JULIAN.] You leave here at twelve, reaching the new street at half-past. You speak from the cluster of lamps by St. Jude's Church.

DOWAGER.

Your speech will be terse, elegant, and vigorous, I hope, Julian?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I hope so. Have you written it, Melton? [MELTON *hands him the sheets of paper.*] Thank you. The usual thing, I suppose?

MR. MELTON.

Quite, quite.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Thank you. There's nothing like the usual thing. [*Referring to the speech.*] "By opening up these majestic avenues London takes beer——"

MR. MELTON.

Air.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I beg your pardon. "——takes air into her system and keeps her place in the race with her sister cities." Excellent.

DOWAGER.

Who will throw the bottle?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

No one, I hope.

MR. MELTON.

You are thinking of the christening of a ship, Lady Drumdurris.

DOWAGER.

Pardon me.

MR. MELTON.

I have to see Superintendent Snudden now as to the police arrangements.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Dear me! You anticipate no pellets?

MR. MELTON.

Hardly.

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SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

It's so unfortunate it isn't a wet day.

DOWAGER.

Julian!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

An umbrella is such a safeguard.

MR. MELTON.

I'll see that the carriage closes easily.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Thank you. And Lady Twombley might take an extra sunshade.

[MELTON *goes out.* *The* DOWAGER *closes the door carefully after him.*]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

[*Reading.*] "I can conceive no position more agreeable to a Minister of the Crown than that which——"

DOWAGER.

Julian!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Dora?

DOWAGER.

You wonder why I am with you at this early hour. I need hardly say I have a motive.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I suppose so.

DOWAGER.

Knowing that you were not going down to Browning Street this morning, and that Lady Twombley and Imogen were to take Euphemia shopping in Bond Street, I grasped the chance of seeing you alone. Julian, what has happened to your wife?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

To Katherine?

DOWAGER.

There is a shocking change.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Recently?

DOWAGER.

It began two or three months ago. She's not the woman she was at the commencement of the season.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

You alarm me. In what way?

DOWAGER.

Every way. Her appearance.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I haven't noticed it.

DOWAGER.

Being her husband, it is natural you should not. Her variable temperament! At one moment she looks as if she would like to bury everybody, me especially; the next she is laughing in a manner I must designate as positively provincial.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Dora, you quite distress me.

DOWAGER.

I came early for that purpose.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Thank you.

DOWAGER.

Perhaps you resent my interference.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

No, no.

DOWAGER.

It would not deter me if you did. The grand motive of my life is a firm, undeviating, persistent policy of practical interference. I am a social warrior; the moment I scent domestic carnage I hurl myself into the *mêlée* and plant my flag. Julian, my flag is planted in your household.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

But I am aware of nothing disquieting to Katherine's peace of mind.

DOWAGER.

Don't tell me!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Two or three months ago there *was* a little difficulty——

DOWAGER.

Ah!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

But it was mine, not Katherine's.

DOWAGER.

Yours?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Frankly, I was embarrassed for ready money.

DOWAGER.

Oh, dear!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

But Katherine, who is really of an extremely thrifty nature, promptly placed her very considerable savings at my disposal, and the difficulty ceased.

DOWAGER.

It never struck me your wife was thrifty.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Nor me till that moment. Which shows how liable the most careful observer is to error. [*Resuming the study of his speech.*] Pray excuse me.

DOWAGER.

[*To herself.*] Um! [*She goes up to the window.*]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

[*Studying.*] "I can conceive no position more agreeable to a Minister of the Crown——" I'll go upstairs, quietly. "——than that which I occupy upon this occasion."

[*He moves softly toward the door. The* DOWAGER *turns suddenly.*]

DOWAGER.

Julian!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Dora?

DOWAGER.

I don't like your wife's great friendship for Mrs. Gaylustre.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Katherine finds her a bright companion.

DOWAGER.

Katherine has *my* companionship. It's true I can't cut a sleeve like that lady.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

It is to be regretted that poor Mrs. Gaylustre is forced to follow the modern fashion of increasing her income by devices formerly practised only by the lower middle-classes.

DOWAGER.

She sticks pins in her bosom as though she relished it.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

But, after all, Dora, Madame Mauricette, of Plunkett Street, and Mrs. Gaylustre, widow of Lord Bulpitt's son, are two very distinct persons. Excuse me. [*He continues studying his speech.*]

DOWAGER.

But what was she *before* her marriage?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

You must really give me notice of that question—I beg your pardon—I don't know.

DOWAGER.

This lady now walks into your house as if it were her own!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Ah!

DOWAGER.

Your wife is positively canvassing for invitations for her! Julian!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I shall be unprepared with my speech!

DOWAGER.

My family comes before everything!

[PROBYN *enters.*]

PROBYN.

Lord and Lady Drumdurris are inquiring for you, my lady.

DOWAGER.

Beg them to come here. [PROBYN *retires.*]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Ah, then, if you'll allow me——

DOWAGER.

No, Julian. This is another family matter of terrible importance.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

My dear Dora!

DOWAGER.

Keith and Egidia approach you at this early hour at my instigation. I have a painful motive.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Oh, dear me!

[EGIDIA *enters, dressed in fashionable walking costume, her face pale and troubled.*]

EGIDIA.

[*Sadly.*] Sir Julian.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

My dear Egidia, there is nothing amiss, I hope?

EGIDIA.

Ah! Everything is amiss, Sir Julian.

DOWAGER.

Julian, the relations between my son and his wife have become terribly strained.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

No, no!

EGIDIA.

Indeed, yes!

DOWAGER.

I have done all in my power to relieve the horrible tension—if anything, I have made matters worse. My hope is now centred in you. Here is Keith.

EGIDIA.

Ah!

[EGIDIA *sits upon a settee staring before her.* DRUMDURRIS *enters, looking much worried.*]

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Ah, mother. [*Grasping* SIR JULIAN'S *hand with feeling.*] Sir Julian.

[*He and his wife look severely at one another and draw themselves up.*]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

My dear Keith, what can I do for you?

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Ha! Explain, mother.

DOWAGER.

Julian, my son and his wife have cordially agreed to refer their grave differences to your judgment.

EGIDIA.

Without binding ourselves to abide by Sir Julian's decision.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Naturally.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Pray tell me the cause of dispute.

DOWAGER.

The future of their child.

EGIDIA.

Ah, yes.

DOWAGER.

The adjustment of the career he is to follow.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

That is precisely it.

DOWAGER.

[*To* DRUMDURRIS.] Where is Fergus?

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

He accompanied us.

EGIDIA.

He is with Angèle in the next room.

DOWAGER.

[*Calling at the door.*] Angèle! Angèle!

ANGÈLE.

[*Outside.*] Miladi?

DOWAGER.

Bring Lord Aberbrothock here.

[ANGÈLE *a French nurse, characteristically attired, enters, carrying a richly-dressed infant.* DRUMDURRIS *and* EGIDIA *look into its face together.*]

ANGÈLE.

Figurez-vous, milord, qu'il a dormi pendant tout le trajet! et puis quand je suis descendue de voiture, il s'est réveillé en pleurant . . . ah mais, en pleurant!

DOWAGER.

Give me Lord Aberbrothock. [*She takes the child from* ANGÈLE.] Wait in the next room, Angèle.

ANGÈLE.

Yes, miladi. J'espère bien que Monsieur le Vicomte ne va plus crier, car ça pourrait faire de la peine à sa grand'maman. [ANGÈLE *goes out.*]

DOWAGER.

Now, Julian, this is the point. You see Fergus. Politics or the Army?

EGIDIA.

Politics.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

The Army.

DOWAGER.

Pray speak, Julian.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Er—um—perhaps it would be rather precipitate——

EGIDIA.

I differ entirely. The child's intelligence must be directed into a particular channel from the beginning.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

In that I heartily concur. For instance, the question of toys is already most urgent.

EGIDIA.

He is without playthings at present, so his mind is quite open.

DOWAGER.

You appear to have no views, Julian.

EGIDIA.

Lady Drumdurris, let Sir Julian look at the height and character of Fergus's brow.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Pray do. It's a soldier's forehead.

DOWAGER.

Julian. [*She hands the infant to* SIR JULIAN.]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Thank you. Politics or the Army? [*Addressing the child in his arms.*] My dear Fergus, take my advice, not, *not* politics.

EGIDIA.

Ah!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

If you attach any trifling importance to veracity as a habit, *not* politics. If you would care at any time upon any subject to form your own opinions, and having formed them, would wish to maintain them, *not* politics. If you desire to be of the smallest service to your fellow man, and if you would sleep as peacefully at sixty as you now sleep at six months, *not* politics.

EGIDIA.

Sir Julian!

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

The Army!

EGIDIA.

Never!

DOWAGER.

This is most distressing. [*Calling at the open door.*] Angèle! Angèle!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Heard outside.*] Why, Dora!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Katherine.

[LADY TWOMBLEY *enters with* IMOGEN *and* LADY EUPHEMIA *in walking costumes.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

How good of you to come early! [*Kissing* EGIDIA.] Egidia, dearest! [*To* DRUMDURRIS.] Good-morning, Keith. Ah! you've brought Fergus to see me! The angel!

[*With cries of delight* LADY TWOMBLEY, IMOGEN, *and* LADY EUPHEMIA *gather round* SIR JULIAN *and the baby.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

The pet!

IMOGEN.

The mite!

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

He is *too* sweet!

THE THREE.

Oh—h—h!

[BROOKE *enters.*]

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

[*Shaking hands with* DRUMDURRIS.] Hallo, what's the matter?

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

[*With dignity.*] They are looking at my son.

[ANGÈLE *has entered. She takes the infant from* SIR JULIAN.]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

We've enjoyed a splendid hour in Bond Street—in and out of twenty shops, eh, girls?

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Yes, Aunt Kate.

IMOGEN.

Yes, mamma.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Bought all we could think of and ordered the rest.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

My dear!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Then why don't they abolish Bond Street? It's the crucible of London—set your foot in it and everything about you that's metal dissolves.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Aunt has been *too* extravagant this morning.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Extravagant! I! Oh, no—only I dearly wish there was no such plague as money. If the little words "thank you" were the one universal current coin, what anxieties, what cravings, what follies some poor women would be spared! Why can't we buy choice stuffs at three-and-a-half thank-yous a yard?

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Oh, Aunt Kate!

IMOGEN.

Mamma!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

It's nothing to laugh at. Ah, girls, if "thank you" paid for everything, being out of breath would be our only bankruptcy! Oh, my poor brain!

IMOGEN.

[*To* SIR JULIAN.] Mamma has a bad headache to-day, papa.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

A headache! never! Girls, what is it we bought and brought home with us? I forget.

IMOGEN.

We didn't buy him, mamma—we met him. You mean Cousin Valentine.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Looking round.*] Of course—Valentine. Where is he? [*Calling.*] Valentine!

[VALENTINE *enters very plainly dressed.*]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Mr. White! [*Bowing stiffly.*] How do you do?

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Why, Val! What?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

We met the poor boy outside the tourists' ticket office in Piccadilly. He's off again to-morrow.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Off! Where to?

VALENTINE WHITE.

Egypt.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

We shan't see him again for another ten years, I suppose.

IMOGEN.

Oh, mamma!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

The odd creature has heard of a congenial tribe who reside in excavations cut in a rock. It'll end in my having a nephew who's a mummy.

IMOGEN.

[*Tearfully.*] Oh, don't!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Katherine, this child is not well.

IMOGEN.

Yes, I am, papa—but I don't like—the idea—of parting—with anybody or anything—even a k-k-kitten.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Soothingly.*] Imogen, my dear!

IMOGEN.

Be quiet, mamma!

[*The* DOWAGER, LADY EUPHEMIA, EGIDIA, *and* ANGÈLE *with the baby go out.* IMOGEN *runs after them.* SIR JULIAN *resumes the study of his speech.* LADY TWOMBLEY *opens some letters which are lying on the table.*]

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

[*To* VALENTINE.] I never knew such a queer chap! Come upstairs and tell us all about it—what!

[BROOKE, VALENTINE, *and* DRUMDURRIS *go out.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Katherine?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

It's all right, pa—it's nothing. [*To herself.*] Gaylustre! [*Reading a letter.*] "I will accompany you and dear Sir Julian to the interesting ceremony of this morning. Pray keep me a seat in your carriage." [*Crushing the letter in her hand.*] The demon! The relentless demon!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

"I can conceive no position more agreeable to a Minister of the Crown——"

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Pa, dear, Mrs. Gaylustre will go with us to the opening of the new street.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

H'm! Katherine, are you sure that Mrs. Gaylustre is *quite*——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh, quite.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

If I were you I should really think twice——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh, I can't.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Can't think twice?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I can't risk offending such a—dear friend.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

But, Katherine——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Understand me, pa—she will sit in our carriage.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Then understand *me*, Katherine, I will not have my knees cramped by a lady whose social status is equivocal.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Ah! Julian! Don't attempt to come between me and Mrs. Gaylustre.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Katherine!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

You will assist her into the carriage, you will help her to alight; when she arrives you will be charmed to see her, when she leaves you will be a mass of regret. You hear me!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

This is a most extraordinary friendship!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

It *is* an exceptional friendship. Pa, say you're delighted this great friend of mine is to be one of us to-day.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Well, to please you, my dear, of course, I——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Yes?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I am delighted.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Ah!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

[*To himself.*] I see—I see the change in my wife that Dora spoke of.

[PROBYN *enters with cards on a salver. At the same moment the* DOWAGER *enters and looks out of the window.*]

DOWAGER.

[*To herself.*] They are punctual!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Looking at the cards.*] Lady Macphail and Sir Colin. Not at home. If ever a woman was out I am.

DOWAGER.

[*To* PROBYN.] Stop! [*To* LADY TWOMBLEY.] Kate, what are you doing? This visit is planned by me!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Why?

DOWAGER.

I have a motive.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh, Dora!

DOWAGER.

[*To* PROBYN.] Lady Twombley will see Sir Colin and Lady Macphail here. [PROBYN *goes out.*]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Ah! then, if you'll allow me——

DOWAGER.

No, Julian. This is another family matter.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Another!

DOWAGER.

These people have called to formally propose for the hand of Imogen.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

To propose!

DOWAGER.

Last night, at the ball of the Perth Highlanders, I danced the Strathspey and Reel with Sir Colin. In the excitement I wrung from him an admission of his affection.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Pa, what shall we do?

DOWAGER.

Do? The head of the Clan Macphail! Eighty thousand acres! Julian?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*To herself.*] If it would provide for Imogen before the smash!

DOWAGER.

If Imogen is a high-minded girl she will be mad with delight.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Will she? [*To herself.*] Ah! and will she learn to look down on pa and me when we're aged paupers?

[PROBYN *enters.*]

PROBYN.

Sir Colin Macphail—Lady Macphail.

[LADY MACPHAIL *enters, dressed simply and quaintly in an old-fashioned silk gown, followed closely by* MACPHAIL, *whose clothes are capacious and clumsy, and who seems very ill at ease.* PROBYN *withdraws.*]

DOWAGER.

Dear Lady Macphail—Sir Colin!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Shaking hands with* LADY MACPHAIL *and* MACPHAIL.] How do you do? [*Eyeing* MACPHAIL.] Oh, dear!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

[*Shaking hands.*] Delighted.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*To* MACPHAIL.] Pray sit down. You must be fatigued with last night's dance.

LADY MACPHAIL.

No Macphail is ever fatigued. But the poor lad feels like a caged eagle in the dress of the South.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I am sure it is—most becoming.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Sit, lad. [MACPHAIL *sits, hitching up his trousers unhappily.*] You know the object of our visit, Sir Julian?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Lady Drumdurris has hinted——

LADY MACPHAIL.

The boy is here to pour out the passionate torrent of his love for your child Imogen. Speak, Colin.

[MACPHAIL *rouses himself, rises, and looks round.*]

MACPHAIL.

Mother, you do it. [*He resumes his seat.*]

LADY MACPHAIL.

Ah, if we were at Castle Ballocheevin, with the wind roaring round Ben Muchty, and the sound of the pipers playing by the shores of Loch-na-Doich, then you would hear Colin's voice rise loud and high.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

As we are denied these obvious advantages, it is almost necessary to ask you to explain——

LADY MACPHAIL.

The lad has met your child on but three or four occasions.

MACPHAIL.

Just three occasions and a bit, mother.

LADY MACPHAIL.

But he loves her with a love that only a Macphail can experience.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Of course one would like to know precisely the kind of affection that is.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Naturally. Speak, Colin.

[MACPHAIL *rises, embarrassed.*]

MACPHAIL.

I love her well enough.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Bravely said!

DOWAGER.

Delightful. [*To* SIR JULIAN *and* LADY MACPHAIL.] A grand nature.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Go on, Colin.

MACPHAIL.

That's all, mother. [*He resumes his seat.*]

LADY MACPHAIL.

[*To* LADY TWOMBLEY.] You have heard the lad?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Distinctly.

LADY MACPHAIL.

As we are all to meet next month as Lord Drumdurris's guests at Drumdurris Castle, it would be well if this engagement were settled at once.

DOWAGER.

Without delay.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

The question, of course, is whether Imogen—h'm!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Whether Imogen can return the affection——

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Which Sir Colin honours her by entertaining.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Has the lad your permission to pour into her ear such impassioned words as he has just uttered to us?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I think there can be no objection to *that*.

DOWAGER.

Certainly not.

LADY MACPHAIL.

When will your daughter grant him an hour for that purpose?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

An *hour?*

MACPHAIL.

Three-quarters will be enough, mother.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Bravely said!

DOWAGER.

Charming!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

When, Julian?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

H'm! when?

DOWAGER.

When? [IMOGEN'S *voice is heard outside.*]

IMOGEN.

[*Calling.*] Mamma, dear!

DOWAGER.

When? I suggest, now. Here is Imogen.

[MACPHAIL *rises hastily and awkwardly.* IMOGEN *enters.*]

IMOGEN.

Oh, I didn't know you had visitors. [*Shaking hands with* SIR COLIN *and* LADY MACPHAIL.] Sir Colin —Lady Macphail.

DOWAGER.

Now, Julian, leave them together! Katherine!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Imogen, my dear.

[IMOGEN *comes to* SIR JULIAN. LADY TWOMBLEY, *the* DOWAGER, LADY MACPHAIL, *and* MACPHAIL *talk together.*]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Talk to Sir Colin for a few moments while I look through my speech.

IMOGEN.

Certainly, papa. [SIR JULIAN *goes out.*] What an awful task! [*Taking a book from the table.*]

LADY MACPHAIL.

[*Quietly to* MACPHAIL.] Colin, let her hear how a Macphail can love. [*Kissing him.*] My boy! [*To the* DOWAGER *and* LADY TWOMBLEY.] I'll drive round to Lady Macwhirter's and return. Leave them! Ah, the pipers shall play to the home-coming of a bride at Castle Ballocheevin! [*She goes out.*]

DOWAGER.

Come, Katherine. Think of it! To be the mother-in-law of the head of the Clan Macphail!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Dora, what's the use of a head with no tongue in it?

[*The* DOWAGER *and* LADY TWOMBLEY *go out.* MACPHAIL *looks round uneasily.*]

MACPHAIL.

[*To himself.*] Where's mother?

IMOGEN.

[*To herself.*] Oh, why do they leave us! [*To* MACPHAIL.] Were you at the dance of the Perth Highlanders last night, Sir Colin?

MACPHAIL.

Aye, I was.

IMOGEN.

Did you dance much?

MACPHAIL.

Aye, I did.

IMOGEN.

[*To herself.*] He must make the next remark.

MACPHAIL.

[*Nerving himself and rising suddenly.*] Miss Twombley!

IMOGEN.

Sir Colin!

MACPHAIL.

I—I just wish you had been there.

IMOGEN.

Do you? Why?

MACPHAIL.

Because—because—because I'm thinking there was room for more people.

IMOGEN.

Oh, of course. [*She goes to the window and looks out.*] Lady Macphail is just driving away.

MACPHAIL.

No!

IMOGEN.

Yes, there she goes.

[MACPHAIL *goes hastily to the window and looks out.*]

MACPHAIL.

[*To himself.*] Oh! Mother!

[*He goes out quickly unnoticed by* IMOGEN.]

IMOGEN.

She has turned the corner, Sir Colin. Did you see her? Why, where is he?

[VALENTINE *enters. She does not see him.*]

VALENTINE WHITE.

Good-bye, Imogen. [*She turns to him.*]

IMOGEN.

Ah! [*Falteringly.*] Why will you go away, Val?

VALENTINE WHITE.

You know my craze. Everything in this country is so stuck-up.

IMOGEN.

Mamma's not—stuck-up, as you call it.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Her gowns frighten me. My first recollection of anything is Aunt Kitty in a print-skirt at a wash-tub.

IMOGEN.

Hush! don't, Val!

VALENTINE WHITE.

There now! you're horrified!

IMOGEN.

One doesn't wish everybody to know.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Then that's being stuck-up, Imogen.

IMOGEN.

Then we differ.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Of course. Everybody does differ from me in this stuck-up country. Wish me good-bye.

IMOGEN.

[*Looking away.*] I presume my brother Brooke is stuck-up also?

VALENTINE WHITE.

Well, he appears to have fallen into the starch after that wash of Aunt Kitty's.

IMOGEN.

Indeed. And papa?

VALENTINE WHITE.

Oh, of course, he's ironed out by the House of Commons.

IMOGEN.

How very rude! [*Laying her hand on his arm.*] And am I—altered, Val?

VALENTINE WHITE.

Altered! The change is heart-breaking!

IMOGEN.

Oh, how cruel!

VALENTINE WHITE.

Altered! Where are the tiny tea-things with which you once played at making tea in your old school-room? Where is the hoop you used to trundle in Portman Square—the skipping-rope Brooke and I turned for you till our arms nearly dropped from our shoulders? Where are the marbles I gave you—the top I taught you to spin? I say, where are these things and the jolly little girl who delighted in them?

IMOGEN.

[*With much dignity.*] I think you're so violent that it isn't safe to speak to you. But I'll ask you one question.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Pray do.

IMOGEN.

Where is the good-tempered, curly-headed boy for whom I used to make the tea; the boy who taught me, very patiently, how to play the marbles and to spin the top?

VALENTINE WHITE.

You see him.

IMOGEN.

Oh, no. No, Val, no.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Imogen! You don't mean, at any rate, that I'm stuck-up?

IMOGEN.

No, indeed, I think you're shockingly stuck-down. [*He turns away, hanging his head. She comes to him.*] There, now I've made you ashamed of yourself.

VALENTINE WHITE.

No, you haven't!

IMOGEN.

Then I will do so. Remain here. I will return in a moment. Don't stir! [*She runs out.*]

VALENTINE WHITE.

Shall I run away? Ah, if she only knew how ardently I wish that she had changed still more—how I wish that she had grown quite unlovable or I had forgotten how to love her! It's hopeless; I *will* run away.

[*He opens the door and the* DOWAGER *peeps in.*]

DOWAGER.

May I come in?

VALENTINE WHITE.

Eh? Oh, certainly.

[*The* DOWAGER *enters.*]

DOWAGER.

[*To herself.*] What has become of them? [*To* VALENTINE.] Pardon me, have you seen my niece, Imogen?

VALENTINE WHITE.

She has just left this room.

DOWAGER.

With Sir Colin Macphail?

VALENTINE WHITE.

Oh, no.

[*A cab whistle is heard.* VALENTINE *looks out of the window.*]

DOWAGER.

[*To herself.*] Where is he? I shan't sleep till I know it is settled.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Here's Sir Colin—hailing a cab.

DOWAGER.

Ah! Something must have happened! [*She goes hastily towards the door;* VALENTINE *is in her way.*] Let me pass, please! I have a motive!

[*She goes out as* IMOGEN *enters by another door carrying a large old-fashioned box.*]

IMOGEN.

Valentine.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Why, what have you there?

IMOGEN.

A modern young lady's jewel casket. Open it, please. [*Kneeling, he opens the box.*]

VALENTINE WHITE.

[*Looking into the box.*] Imogen! The tea-things! I recognize them!

IMOGEN.

You see, I've never parted with my playthings, Val.

VALENTINE WHITE.

[*Dragging out a large, faded, once gaudy doll.*] And here's Rosa! I helped to cut out Rosa's mantle. Battered old Rosa!

IMOGEN.

[*Taking the doll from him.*] Don't! Old she may be, but her sex should protect her from insult.

VALENTINE WHITE.

And here are my marbles! and the top! Ah, ah! the skipping-rope! Imogen — perhaps — I — I've done you an injustice.

IMOGEN.

Do you think so?

VALENTINE WHITE.

I feared fashion had put your bright little nature into tight corsets—but—I see—I see——

IMOGEN.

[*Replacing the toys in the box.*] You see, Val.

VALENTINE WHITE.

I see you have some affection for the time when you were not Miss Twombley, but only — little Jenny.

IMOGEN.

Ah!

VALENTINE WHITE.

Not that these old dumb things prove much.

IMOGEN.

Oh, Val!

VALENTINE WHITE.

They prove their own existence—not the existence of little Jenny.

IMOGEN.

[*Crying.*] How unjust you are!

VALENTINE WHITE.

Perhaps. But your words and actions are so unlike.

IMOGEN.

[*Wiping her eyes upon the doll's frock.*] No, no.

VALENTINE WHITE.

I fancy we are children again when I hear you; but when I see your prim figure and stately walk I miss the little girl whose hair never submitted to a ribbon or a hairpin——

IMOGEN.

Oh!

[*Impulsively she lets down her hair and disorders it wildly.*]

VALENTINE WHITE.

[*Not observing her.*] I miss the little Jenny with a tumbled frock [*She quickly disarranges her bow and sash*], the thoughtless romp who was generally minus one shoe!

IMOGEN.

[*Fiercely.*] Valentine!
[*She takes off a shoe and flings it away.*]

VALENTINE WHITE.

Jenny!

IMOGEN.

Now! play! play marbles!

VALENTINE WHITE.

What!

IMOGEN.

Play marbles!
[*They go down upon their knees, she deliberately arranges the marbles for the game, he staring at her blankly.*]

IMOGEN.

My mark—play.

VALENTINE WHITE.

I beg your pardon, Jenny—I've been all wrong.

IMOGEN.

You have indeed, Val. Play. [*He plays seriously.*] Not within a mile of it.

VALENTINE WHITE.

My eye is quite out.

IMOGEN.

My turn.

VALENTINE WHITE.

By Jupiter, you're still a crack at it!

IMOGEN.

Am I? Then which of us has changed—you or I? [*She lays her hand on his.*] Val, don't go away and live in a rock.

VALENTINE WHITE.

What am I to do? I'm poor, Jenny, and I suppose I'm crazy.

IMOGEN.

Any sort of horrid life would suit you, wouldn't it?

VALENTINE WHITE.

I suppose it would.

IMOGEN.

Then ask Lord Drumdurris to make you a bailiff or a head gamekeeper at Drumdurris.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Not rough enough.

IMOGEN.

Why, you could get dreadfully dirty and wet through there every day.

VALENTINE WHITE.

That's true.

IMOGEN.

And, Val, we're all going up to Drumdurris next month.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Are you?

IMOGEN.

Yes, and if you like, I—I'll bring the marbles.

[BROOKE *enters.*]

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Imogen! Oh, I say! what?

VALENTINE WHITE.

Do you ever play marbles now, Brooke?

[DRUMDURRIS *enters.*]

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Marbles, no! Billiards.

[VALENTINE *collects the marbles, and puts them into the box.*]

IMOGEN.

[*To* DRUMDURRIS.] Keith! Oh, Keith, do me a favour!

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Certainly.

IMOGEN.

Offer my poor cousin, Mr. White, some post in or about Drumdurris Castle.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

What kind of post?

IMOGEN.

Some wretched, inferior position in which he needn't be very polite.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

What will he say if I propose such a thing?

IMOGEN.

He'll be extremely rude, I think. But, oh, I shall be so grateful, Keith.

[LADY TWOMBLEY *enters.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Imogen! Child, what has happened to your head?

IMOGEN.

I—I've been playing marbles, mamma.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Not on your head?

IMOGEN.

No, mamma, upon the floor.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

With Sir Colin?

IMOGEN.

Certainly not, mamma; I don't know Sir Colin nearly well enough to sit with him upon the floor. [*Putting up her hair.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Darling, has Sir Colin made any remark of an interesting nature?

IMOGEN.

No—he stammered a little, and, while my back was turned, he ran away after his mammy.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*To herself.*] I knew it! Why didn't we lock him in till he had provided for my poor child's future?

[PROBYN *enters.*]

PROBYN.

Mrs. Gaylustre is here, my lady.

IMOGEN.

Oh, that person!

[IMOGEN *snatches up the box of playthings and hurries out.* MRS. GAYLUSTRE *enters.* PROBYN *retires.*]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*To everybody.*] How d'ye do? How d'ye do? Lord Drumdurris, charmed to see you. How are you, Brooke?

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

[*To himself.*] Brooke! Impudence!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

You look bilious, Kate.

[*She kisses* LADY TWOMBLEY, *who sinks on to the settee.*]

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

[*To* DRUMDURRIS.] It's too bad of the Mater! Fancy a fellow making a chum of his tailor—what?

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Mr. White, may I speak to you?

[BROOKE, DRUMDURRIS, *and* VALENTINE *go out.*]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*Examining the flute.*] Pa has been tootling again, Kate—we must buy him a drum.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Ah—h—h—h!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Hullo! What's the matter?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

As if you didn't know! Oh, those awful bits of paper!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Still worrying about those little Bills of yours which my brother Joseph holds, eh?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Those Bills! Why doesn't the ink fade that's on them, or the house burn that holds 'em?

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Impossible. Joseph and I have been taught to believe that there is a special Providence watching over all Bills of Exchange. Come, don't fume—Bill Number One doesn't fall due till next month.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh, Gaylustre, I shan't be able to meet it.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Shan't you? Well, I dare say Jo and I will renew —if you make much of us and pet us. Meanwhile, don't think of the Bills.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Think of 'em! I eat them—they're on every *ménu;* I drink them—they label the champagne. My pillows are stuffed with them, for I hear their rustle when I turn my restless head. Small as those strips of blue are, they paper every wall of my home!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

I should drive out, then, as much as possible.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

When I do the sky is blue!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*Carelessly taking up a newspaper.*] At what time do we leave here?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Sir Julian and I start at twelve.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

See that I'm not squeezed up in the carriage. I don't play at sardines in this gown.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Talking of sardines, I shall lunch here to-day, *en famille*.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Gaylustre! you fiend! I—I can't stand it.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Don't quite see how you're going to get out of it.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

It's true I owe that brother of yours thousands.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Well, we *have* kept your establishment going for some time.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

But I don't owe *you* as much as a linen button!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Jo and I are one.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

No! I'll never believe that a man — even a money-lender—would dance a set of devilish quadrilles on a lady when she's down, as you're doing.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Ha, ha!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I saw your brother on that one fatal night. Common person that he is, he must have a heart under his vulgar waistcoat.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Be careful! Don't insult my Jo!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I compliment him! I will appeal to him to protect me from your claws, Gaylustre!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Oh, you will, will you?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I will.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Very well then—do it! Kate Twombley, go to that door and call my brother Jo!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

What!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Do it!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

What—do you—mean?

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Open that door and call Jo!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

No, no! [*She opens the door and looks out.*] You are only frightening me!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Call—Mr. Lebanon!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Mr. Lebanon!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*Outside.*] Heah!

[LADY TWOMBLEY *utters a cry of horror as* MR. JOSEPH LEBANON *enters—a smartly dressed, unctuous, middle-aged person, of a most pronounced common Semitic type, with a bland manner and a contented smile.*]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Lady Twombley, delighted to find myself in your elegant 'ouse. Most *recherché*.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

How do you come here?

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Fan brought me.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

How dare she?

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

'Ow dare she? H'm! Fan, I 'ope and trust not a coolness between you and Lady T.

[LADY TWOMBLEY *sinks into a chair.*]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

She was dying to see you—there's no pleasing her.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Dyin' to see me! Flattered—flattered. [*He sits in close proximity to* LADY TWOMBLEY.] Deah Lady T, you and I and nobody by, eh? Excuse my humour. 'Ow can I 'ave the honour of servin' you? Don't 'esitate, Lady T, don't 'esitate.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I only wanted—to beg you—to rid me of that viper.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

That's going a little too far!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

There *is* a coolness—a triflin', temporary coolness. Fan, be reasonable—Lady T, be forgivin'. Kiss and be friends.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I know that you've got me—what's the expression?—on something or another.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

I 'ope "toast" is not the word you requiah, Lady Twombley?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh, yes, on toast.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Oh, Lady T.! Lady T.!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I know that if I can't meet those awful Bills you can drag my name into the papers, and set all London grinning for a month.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Oh! Oh, Fan, is that my way of doin' business?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

If you're a nice, honest man—as you look—you'll take her away, and never, either of you, show your ugl—show your faces here again.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Ah, Lady T., now we come to the aim and object of the mornin' call which I have the 'appiness of making on you. Fan, you haven't explained to Lady T. You really must cut in.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

I shan't. Explain yourself.

[LEBANON *rises, replacing his chair.*]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

My dear Lady T., the long and the short of it is that Fan and I have considerable social ambition.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

You too! Not *you!*

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

And why not? Fanny, cut in!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Go on, Jo dear.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Lady Twombley, it has been the desiah of Fan and self, ever since that period of our lives which I may describe as our checkered child'ood, to reach the top of the social tree.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Hah!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Lady Twombley, you'll pardon my remarking that you are a little trying. I say, Fan and I desiah to reach the top of the social tree, where the cocoanuts are. Excuse my humour. Fan's had a whirl or two in the circles of fashion.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

She! A hanger-on to the skirts of Society!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

And very good skirts too when she makes 'em.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Jo, drop that.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Excuse my humour, Fan. As for me, from those early boy'ood's days when I made temporary ad-

vances of ha'pence to my sister Fanny, promptly and without inquiry, I have devoted myself to finance.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Finance!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

But now, Lady T—to use a poetic figure—I am prepared to cut an eight on the frozen lake of gentility.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Man!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

I ignore the innuendo. Lady Twombley, I am aware that for a successful *entrée* into Society I requiah a—ha—a substantial guarantee. I 'ave, therefore, the honour and the 'appiness to put myself under your sheltering and I 'ope sympathetic wing.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

You—you will drive me mad! You won't dare to call here, to contaminate my bell-handle, to send up your hideous name!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Oh, Fan, I really can't! This is descendin' to a mere wrangle. Pray cut in.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

No, Lady Twombley, as the Season is drawing to a close, Joseph certainly does not intend to attach himself to your London establishment.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Not for Joseph—excuse my humour.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

But he and I do mean to take our flight from town with the rest of the swallows. [*Pointing to a paragraph in the journal she still carries.*] Look here, we saw this paragraph in the paper yesterday. Read it.

[LADY TWOMBLEY *knocks the paper to the ground.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Insolent!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Jo, pet—read it.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Fanny, this is really most trying. [*Picking up the paper and reading.*] "There are already signs of an exodus from town. Among the first of the notabilities to turn their faces northward are Sir Julian and Lady Twombley, who will spend the autumn at Drumdurris Castle as the guests of their nephew, Lord Drumdurris."

LADY TWOMBLEY.

What is this to you?

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

What's that to us!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Fan, what's that to us! Lady Twombley, we entertain a not unreasonable desiah to spend *our* autumn at Drumdurris Castle.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

In the kitchen?

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Oh, Fan, I really can't! You must cut in again.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

As the guests of Lord Drumdurris.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Never!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Bill Number One falls due next month when you are at Drumdurris Castle!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

No, no! Fan, do *not* mix up business with friendship. You know my rule.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Get us to Drumdurris and we renew!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Oh, Fanny, how plainly you put it! Don't!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Never!

[MR. MELTON *enters.*]

MR. MELTON.

The carriages are here, Lady Twombley.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I—I'll come.

[DRUMDURRIS *enters talking to* VALENTINE. IMOGEN, LADY EUPHEMIA, *and* BROOKE *follow; then* EGIDIA *and* ANGÈLE *with the infant.*]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*To* LADY TWOMBLEY.] Introduce me!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Never!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*To* LADY TWOMBLEY.] Introduce him!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I will not!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Lady Twombley!

[*He produces his pocketbook, opens it, and gives her a glimpse of the Bills.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

The Bills! Oh!

[*She makes a futile snatch at the pocketbook.*]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Lady Twombley, introduce me!

[SIR JULIAN *enters, intent upon his speech, the MS. of which he carries in his hand.*]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

[*To himself.*] "I can conceive no position more agreeable to a Minister of the Crown——" [*Seeing* LEBANON.] Eh?

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*Whispering to* LADY TWOMBLEY.] Now!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Julian, Lord Drumdurris, Brooke, let me introduce to you—Mr. Lebanon.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*Triumphantly to herself.*] Ah!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*Triumphantly to himself.*] Ah! [LEBANON *grasps* SIR JULIAN'S *hand warmly.*] De-lighted to find myself in your elegant 'ouse. Most *recherché*. [*Shaking hands with all the others.*] You all know my sister Fan. Elegant 'ouse this. Most *recherché*.

[MRS. GAYLUSTRE *runs to* SIR JULIAN *and taking a flower from her dress fastens it in his coat.*]

DOWAGER.

[*Outside.*] Katherine!

[*The* DOWAGER *enters with her arm through* MACPHAIL'S, LADY MACPHAIL *following.*]

DOWAGER.

I've found the truant. He had a motive.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*Quietly to* MRS. GAYLUSTRE.] Who's the Judy?

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*To* LEBANON.] Old Lady Drum.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Ah! [*Turning to the* DOWAGER *and seizing her hand.*] De-lighted! 'Ope to have the pleashah of meetin' you up North.

DOWAGER.

Katherine!

[*There is a general expression of astonishment, and* LADY TWOMBLEY *sinks upon the settee.*]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

THE THIRD ACT.

Disaster.

The scene is the inner hall at Drumdurris Castle, Perthshire, leading on one side to the outer hall, and on the other to the picture gallery. It is solidly and comfortably furnished, and a fire is burning in the grate of the large oaken fireplace. It is an afternoon in August.

Imogen *is sitting at the table reading over a letter she has written.*

Imogen.

"Dear Mr. White." I shall never call him Valentine again, except in my thoughts. [*Reading.*] "Dear Mr. White, I am sorry to hear that you are discontented with your recent appointment to the Deputy-Assistant-Head-Gamekeepership on the Drumdurris estate, and that you consider it a sinecure fit only for a debilitated peer." Now for it. [*Resuming.*] "Permit me to take this opportunity of informing you that I have at length consented to an engagement between myself and Sir Colin Macphail of Ballocheevin." Oh, how awful it looks in ink! [*Resuming.*] "As it is becoming that I should support such a position with dignity I would prefer not encountering your dislike to 'stuck-up people' by ever seeing you again." Oh, Val. "I therefore

suggest that you obtain a nastier appointment than that of Deputy-Assistant-Head-Gamekeeper at Drumdurris without delay." That will do—beautifully. [*In tears.*] Oh, Val, why have you never spoken? I know you are poor, but I would have gone away with you and lived cheerfully and economically in that rock if you had but asked me. Why, why have you never asked me?

[*She sits on a footstool looking into the fire.* BROOKE, *in shooting dress, strolls in with* LADY EUPHEMIA. *They do not see* IMOGEN.]

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

[*Coolly.*] Well, then, Effie, I suppose I may regard our engagement as a fixture—what? I needn't say you'll find me an excellent husband.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Thanks, awfully. But perhaps you had better mention the subject to me again at some other time.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Well, I shall be rather busy for the next week or two.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Oh, quite as you please. [*Giving him her hand.*] But you are really *too* impetuous.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Not at all. [*About to kiss her.*] You'll permit me, naturally?

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

[*Languidly turning her cheek toward him.*] Of

course. Be careful of my hair—it will not be dressed again before lunch.

[*He kisses her cheek cautiously.* IMOGEN *rises without seeing them.*]

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

[*To* BROOKE.] Somebody.

[*They stroll away in opposite directions.*]

IMOGEN.

After all, as he has never been a lover, why shouldn't I see him and mention my engagement in a calm, cool, ladylike way? [*Tearing up the letter passionately.*] I must see him once more—in a calm, cool, ladylike way. I'll write just a line asking him to come to me this morning.

[*As she sits to write* LADY EUPHEMIA *and* BROOKE *stroll in again and meet each other.*]

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

[*To* BROOKE.] Good-morning.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

[*To* LADY EUPHEMIA.] Good-morning.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Why, it's Imogen! Oh, let me congratulate you. [*Kissing her.*] The news is *too* delightful.

IMOGEN.

Thank you.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Accept my congratulations also. Splendid fellow, Macphail; not one of those men who talk the top of your head off.

IMOGEN.

[*Writing.*] No, not quite. Brooke, dear, will you give Mr. White a little note from me?

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Certainly. By the bye, while I think of it, you'll be glad to hear that Effie has honored me by consenting to—er—marry me—what!

IMOGEN.

Effie!

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

How your mind does run on that subject, Brooke!

IMOGEN.

[*Throwing her arms round* LADY EUPHEMIA'S *neck.*] What happy people, both of you!

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

My hair!

IMOGEN.

[*Kissing* BROOKE.] A thousand congratulations, my dear, clever, old brother!

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

The bother with mamma will be too wearying.

IMOGEN.

Why a bother?

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

About my pecuniary position, don't you know. You'll hardly credit it, but I haven't the least idea what pa intends to do for me.

IMOGEN.

But it doesn't matter about that, so that you are deeply attached to each other.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Oh, Imogen, that's *too* ridiculous!

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Quite absurd—what!

IMOGEN.

Besides, if you want money you can work.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Oh, it's no good everybody working. It's this stupid all-round desire to work that throws so many men out of employment. I'll look for Valentine. [IMOGEN *gives him her note.*] He's sure to be about. We're going to shoot over Claigrossie Moor this morning. [*He goes out.*]

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

So you've made up your mind at last?

IMOGEN.

No; other people have made it up for me.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Mamma?

IMOGEN.

Yes, Aunt Dora is the principal person who has rendered my life a burden to me.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Oh, Imogen!

IMOGEN.

It's true. Every hour of the livelong day Aunt Dora has goaded me on to this desirable, detestable match; even at night she has stalked into my room with a lighted candle, startling me out of my beauty sleep, to tell me she will never rest till I am Lady Macphail.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Imogen, it's *too* kind of mamma to take this interest in you.

IMOGEN.

Interest! It's torture. And at last she threatened that if I married anybody else she would expire in great pain and appear to me constantly, a ghost, in her night-gown. Well, you've seen Aunt Dora in her night-gown—you can guess my feelings.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

And that decided you.

IMOGEN.

I went to mamma and asked her advice.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

I guess what that was.

IMOGEN.

Mamma's expression was that she'd give the heels off her best shoes to see me provided for. And so, late last night, while my maid Phipps was washing my head, I gasped out a soapy sort of yes.

[*The* DOWAGER *enters.*]

DOWAGER.

Where is Imogen?

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Here, mamma.

DOWAGER.

[*Embracing* IMOGEN.] My favorite niece! I have just learned your decision over the breakfast-table. I was eating cold grouse at the moment; I thought I should have choked.

IMOGEN.

I hope you are satisfied, aunt.

DOWAGER.

Thoroughly. I feel now that I shall die, a great many years hence, a contented woman. Effie.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Yes, mamma?

DOWAGER.

Don't think you're neglected, child. I cannot provide for everybody at once.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

No, mamma.

DOWAGER.

But having completely settled Imogen, I shall commence the adjustment of your future after lunch.

[LADY MACPHAIL *enters.*]

LADY MACPHAIL.

Ah!

DOWAGER.

Dear Lady Macphail! What glorious news!

LADY MACPHAIL.

[*Rapturously, with her hand upraised.*] Now let the worn banner of the Macphail be run up on the crumbling tower of Castle Ballocheevin!

DOWAGER.

Certainly—by all means.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Now let the roar of the pipes startle the eaglets on the summit of black Ben-Muchty!

DOWAGER.

I hope such arrangements will be made.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Let the shriek of the wild birds resound on the shores of Loch-na-Doich!

DOWAGER.

[*Bringing* IMOGEN *forward.*] But you haven't seen Imogen yet.

LADY MACPHAIL.

[*Embracing her.*] Child! Ah, when Colin learns your answer to his suit you shall listen to such words as none but a Macphail can utter to his betrothed.

DOWAGER.

Doesn't he know?

LADY MACPHAIL.

Not yet. He went out early to watch the sun gild the gray peak of Ben-Auchter.

[LADY TWOMBLEY *enters, looking very troubled.*]

IMOGEN.

Mamma. [LADY MACPHAIL, *the* DOWAGER, *and* LADY EUPHEMIA *talk together.*] Mamma, everybody has congratulated me. Have you nothing to say?

[LADY TWOMBLEY *places her hand fondly on* IMOGEN'S *head.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*In a sepulchral voice.*] Did Phipps dry your head thoroughly last night?

IMOGEN.

Yes, mamma.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Then all's well, I suppose. [SIR JULIAN'S *flute is heard. To herself.*] The first Bill—the first Bill due next week.

[*She sits staring at the fire as* SIR JULIAN *enters, playing the flute.*]

IMOGEN.

Papa.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Imogen, my dear, amidst severe official worries

I must not omit to join in the general pæan of rejoicing.

IMOGEN.

Thank you, papa.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Sir Colin may lack that inexhaustible flow of anecdote with which I have often been credited.

IMOGEN.

He may, papa.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

But I confess I respect a man who will sit for hours without saying anything. I wish there were more like him in the House.

DOWAGER.

Julian, let the newspapers have the details of Imogen's engagement without delay.

IMOGEN.

Oh, no, aunt! Not yet.

DOWAGER.

Imogen, if I may use such an expression—fall-lall! Suffice it, I have a motive.

IMOGEN.

But why the papers?

DOWAGER.

It is our duty to our friends. Do you think if anything serious happened to me, my friends wouldn't like to hear of it without delay? Julian! [SIR JULIAN *writes.*] Besides, it will be current talk at the dance to-morrow night.

LADY MACPHAIL.

The dance! Aye! To-morrow night they shall see a Macphail lead the Strathspey with the girl who is to be his bride!

IMOGEN.

No, indeed they won't!

LADY MACPHAIL.

What!

IMOGEN.

I can't make myself so supremely ridiculous.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Ridiculous!

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Oh, Imogen!

DOWAGER.

Imogen!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Imogen!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

My dear!

[LADY MACPHAIL *closes her eyes.* SIR JULIAN *and the* DOWAGER *take her hands.*]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY and DOWAGER.

My dear Lady Macphail!

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Here is Sir Colin!

DOWAGER and SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Ah!

LADY MACPHAIL.

My boy!

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Why, he is with Mrs. Gaylustre!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

That woman!

DOWAGER.

That woman!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

That woman!

IMOGEN.

That woman!

[MACPHAIL *enters with* MRS. GAYLUSTRE, *he in Highland dress, she wearing a showy costume of tweed tartan with a Scotch bonnet.*]

LADY MACPHAIL.

Colin, lad!

MACPHAIL.

Eh, mother?

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Dear Sir Colin gave me his arm to the top of Ben-Auchter.

DOWAGER and LADY MACPHAIL.

To the top of Ben-Auchter!

MACPHAIL

[*With an anxious glance at* MRS. GAYLUSTRE.] Just to see the sun rise.

DOWAGER.

[*Quietly to* SIR JULIAN.] Julian, that's scandalous!

LADY MACPHAIL.

I thought you always witnessed the sun rise alone, Colin.

MACPHAIL.

As a rule, mother.

DOWAGER.

[*To herself.*] That woman has a motive.

LADY MACPHAIL.

[*Pointing to* IMOGEN.] My son, look—here is Imogen.

MACPHAIL.

[*To* IMOGEN.] Good-morning.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Colin, lad, don't you guess?

MACPHAIL.

No, mother.

LADY MACPHAIL.

[*Rapturously.*] Now let the worn banner of the Macphail be run up on the crumbling tower of Castle Ballocheevin!

MACPHAIL.

[*Vacantly.*] For what reason, mother?

LADY MACPHAIL.

Now let the shriek of the wild birds sound on the shores of Loch-na-Doich!

MACPHAIL.

Why?

LADY MACPHAIL.

[*Embracing* MACPHAIL.] Imogen is to be your bride.

MACPHAIL.

[*Blankly.*] Oh!

[SIR JULIAN, *the* DOWAGER, *and* LADY EUPHEMIA *congratulate him.*]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Most gratified!

DOWAGER.

I have a mother's yearnings toward you.

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

We are *too* rejoiced!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*To herself.*] They've hooked him!

LADY MACPHAIL.

[*Bringing* MACPHAIL *down.*] Hush! Speak to her, Colin, lad. Let her hear how a Macphail greets the woman of his choice.

[LADY MACPHAIL *joins* SIR JULIAN, *the* DOWAGER, *and* LADY EUPHEMIA, *while they all watch* MACPHAIL *as he approaches* IMOGEN.]

LADY MACPHAIL.

Listen!

MACPHAIL.

[*To* IMOGEN.] Er—I'm very much obliged to ye.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Bravely spoken!

DOWAGER.

A grand nature!

IMOGEN.

Thank you, Sir Colin. [*She joins the others.*]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*To* MACPHAIL, *seizing his hand.*] May your life be very, very blissful!

MACPHAIL.

[*Uneasily, withdrawing his hand.*] Mother's looking. [*He joins the rest.*]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*To herself.*] They've hooked my Scotch salmon; but they haven't landed him yet! [*Intercepting* LADY TWOMBLEY *as she advances towards the group.*] Kate!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Reptile!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

I'm not at all satisfied with the way things are going on here.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Aren't you? I think things are beautifully smooth.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

I'm pretty comfortable at Drumdurris myself, thank you; but I'm getting extremely anxious about Joseph.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

So am I.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

I'm afraid Joseph isn't enjoying his little holiday at all. Did you observe him at dinner last night?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Who could help it? The man eats enough for six.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

He's obliged to, his holiday being so brief. But these fine folks treat him as contemptuously as if he were a snail in a cabbage.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Then why does he talk with the leg of a grouse sticking out of the side of his mouth? Why does he drink people's health across the table and call the men-servants "old chaps?"

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Dear Jo! There's nothing classy about him.

[DRUMDURRIS, *in shooting dress, enters, carrying a light wooden box.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Why does he swallow his knife and build pyramids with his bread; and tell long stories with no meaning at all or else with two?

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Well, you must take Jo as Heaven made him. So you'd better make things smooth for him with Lord Drumdurris. If not——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

If not?

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

If not, Jo might, after all, decline to renew.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

And then there would be the devil to pay, wouldn't there?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

As far as I can see there are two devils to pay already.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Ha, ha! Here's Drumdurris. Remember.

[*After talking to the others,* DRUMDURRIS *approaches* LADY TWOMBLEY, *bowing stiffly to* MRS. GAYLUSTRE, *who shakes her fist behind his back.* LADY TWOMBLEY *gives a small nervous shriek.*]

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Aunt?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*With her hand to her heart.*] Spasms.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*Smiling sweetly at* DRUMDURRIS.] Delightful morning.

[*She takes up a newspaper.* SIR JULIAN *and* LADY EUPHEMIA *stroll out.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*To* DRUMDURRIS.] Keith, dear, I want to say a word to you about—dear Mr. Lebanon.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Ah! Aunt!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Have patience, Keith!

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Patience!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

When I begged you to entertain him at Drumdurris I didn't deceive you. I distinctly told you he was one of nature's noblemen.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

I would do much to please you, Aunt Kate, but this individual and his sister——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

You must follow the democratic tendencies of the age, Keith. The peer must go hand in hand with the pig.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Yes, but let it be the companionable, clubable pig. Oh, I have just left him at the breakfast-table.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Is he making a tolerable breakfast this morning?

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

He seems to be making every breakfast in Great Britain.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I see him at it.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

He consumes enough coffee to put a fire out.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Yes; and he swoops down on a cold bird like a vulture.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

It's hideous to see him hurl himself at an omelette.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I know; and with eggs he's a conjurer. What's he engaged on now?

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

When I left him he was an unrecognizable mass of marmalade. He must go!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Don't disregard the sacred laws of hospitality!

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

I must. At another time I might endure him, but now when I am utterly crushed by my own agonizing trouble—— Hark!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

What's the matter?

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

My son.

[ANGÈLE *appears with the infant.*]

ANGÈLE.

[*Mysteriously.*] Is it alright, milord?

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Hush! [*To* LADY TWOMBLEY.] Is Egidia there?

[SIR JULIAN *and* LADY EUPHEMIA *re-enter.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

No.

[LADY TWOMBLEY *joins* SIR JULIAN *and* LADY EUPHEMIA.]

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

[*To* ANGÈLE. All right. [*Fondly to the infant.*] My soldier boy! [ANGÈLE *advances to* DRUMDURRIS.] *He produces a small toy gun and a little drum from a box he carries and hands them to* ANGÈLE.] Don't let Lady Drumdurris discover these.

ANGÈLE.

No.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Above all, let the drum be muffled.

ANGÈLE.

Yees, milord.

[EGIDIA *enters.*]

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

I expect some small cannon by the evening post. Go.

[EGIDIA *comes between* ANGÈLE *and* DRUMDURRIS, *the* DOWAGER *following.*]

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Ah!

ANGÈLE.

Oh, miladi!

EGIDIA.

I am right, then.

[*She takes the toys from* ANGÈLE *and points to the door.* ANGÈLE *withdraws with the infant.*]

DOWAGER.

Keith—Egidia! Don't disagree here!

EGIDIA.

[*To* DRUMDURRIS.] I was loth to credit you with such treachery.

DOWAGER.

Name some convenient hour to disagree this afternoon. I will willingly be present.

EGIDIA.

I have long suspected this conspiracy to anticipate my son's mature judgment. Keith, there is a gulf between us which can never be bridged over.

[EGIDIA *joins the others.*]

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Mother, my life is wasted.

[VALENTINE, *roughly dressed in cords and gaiters, enters, followed by* BROOKE.]

VALENTINE WHITE.

Are you ready, Lord Drumdurris?

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

We are waiting, I presume, for Mr. Lebanon.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

I'll go and stir him up. Ugh! What!

[BROOKE *goes out.*]

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

You'll not join us, Sir Julian?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I daren't. Melton has arrived from town with a mass of papers for my signature. [*Quietly to* DRUMDURRIS.] The Rajputana Canal Question is wearing me out.

VALENTINE WHITE.

[*Whispering to* IMOGEN.] I have your note. I'll return in a few minutes.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*Outside.*] Shootin', my dear sir! When I was in the South 'Ampstead Artillery I could have shown you what shootin' was.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

There's Jo. [*She goes out to meet* LEBANON.]

ALL.

[*With various expressions of disgust.*] Ugh! that man!

[*All gather into groups, as* LEBANON, *looking very ridiculous in Highland costume, enters, followed by* BROOKE.]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*Slapping* MACPHAIL *on the back.*] Mac, dear old boy, 'aven't seen you this morning. [MACPHAIL *turns away distrustfully.*] Lady Mac, I 'ear delightful whispers.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Sir?

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

An approachin' 'appy event. We're like the doves—we're pairin' off, hey; we're pairin' off? [LADY MACPHAIL *stares at him and turns away. He wipes his forehead anxiously.*] It's a little difficult to keep up a long conversation with 'em. They're not what I should term Rattlers. [*Eyeing* EGIDIA.] The fair 'ostess. Ahem! We missed you at the breakfast-table, Lady Drum. Can't congratulate you on your peck—excuse my humour.

[EGIDIA *stares at him and joins* LADY MACPHAIL.] [*To himself.*] They're a chatty lot; I must say they're a chatty lot. I wish Fanny would stick by me and cut in occasionally. There's Lady T. *She* can't ride the 'igh 'orse, at any rate. Lady T.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Mr. Lebanon?

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

You didn't honour me with my game of crib last night.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I—I had a headache.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Never 'ad a 'eadache in my life—don't know 'ow it's spelt.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

It's spelt with an H.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*To* LADY EUPHEMIA, *offering her flowers from his coat.*] Lady Effie, my floral offering.

[LADY EUPHEMIA *catches up her skirts and sweeps past him.*]

[*To himself.*] Chatty, hey? Chatty? [*He comes face to face with the* DOWAGER, *who glares at him.*] Hah! H'm! [*Offering her the flowers.*] I—ah—had these picked for you, by Jove, I did. A present from Joseph.

DOWAGER.

What, sir!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*Replacing the flowers in his coat.*] Excuse my humour. [*Wiping his brow again.*] Chatty! I do wish Fan would cut in and help me. [*Slaps* SIR JULIAN *on the shoulder.*] Twombley, old fellow.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Sir!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Not comin' out with us to-day, hey?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

No.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Gettin' past it, I suppose?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I am kept indoors by pressure of work, Mr. Lebanon.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Oh, of course, the Rajputana Canal Question, hey? I'm a big shareholder in the Rajputana Railway, yer know. I say, tell me——

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I cannot discuss official matters with you.

[SIR JULIAN *turns from him.*]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*To himself as he sits down.*] Chatty! Chatty! I know what this'll end in. It'll end in my standin' on my dignity. Where's Fanny? [*Addressing the others.*] Talkin' about shootin', I'll tell you an amusin' little story.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

[*To* LADY TWOMBLEY *and others sotto voce.*] No, no!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

It's all about myself.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

[*Whispering to the others.*] Good-bye. We're off.

[*There is a general movement, the ladies and* SIR JULIAN *saying good-bye to the shooters, unnoticed by* LEBANON, *who has his back to them.*

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

I was spendin' a day or two down in Essex with my old friend, Captain Bolter, South 'Ampstead Artillery. Dear old Tom—great favourite with the gals. Excuse my humour.

LADY TWOMBLEY, IMOGEN, LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART, SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY, LADY MACPHAIL, and DOWAGER.

[*Quietly to the shooters.*] Good-bye.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

It was wild-fowl Tom and I were after. We were lyin' in a ditch waitin' for the ducks to drift in with the tide. [*As* LEBANON *continues his story all the others gradually and quietly disperse.*] I counted fifty-seven birds through my glass. So said I to Tom, "Tom, I'm in dooced good form, my boy." "Devil you are!" said Tom. "And I lay you a pony to a penny that fifteen of those birds fall to my gun." "Done!" said Tom. [*He is now alone in the room.*] Well, to make a short story a long one—excuse my humour—Tom sneezed. Up I got. So did the ducks. And then what the dooce d'ye think 'appened? I say, what the dooce d'ye think—— [*Discovering that he is alone.*] Well, I'm—— Chatty, ain't they? Chatty!

[MRS. GAYLUSTRE *enters.*]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Jo! why aren't you with the shooters?

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Why! They hooked it while I was tellin' 'em the tale of Tom Bolter and the ducks.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Never mind, my pet.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

It's rude—that's what it is—it's dooced rude.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Come along, we'll walk on to the moor.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

What, are you going too, Fan?

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Yes, dear. Your poor Fanny has a little bit of fun on.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Oh, Fan, if I only 'ad your confidence, your push. But the rudeness of these people is gettin' on my nerves.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Why, Joseph!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

I feel a little 'urt, Fan—a little 'urt.

[VALENTINE *enters.*]

VALENTINE WHITE.

Mr. Lebanon!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Hi! Where are they?

VALENTINE WHITE.

Just starting in the drag. Be quick.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*To* MRS. GAYLUSTRE.] Come on! They shall hear about Tom Bolter and the ducks before I've done with 'em. Come on!

[MRS. GAYLUSTRE *and* LEBANON *hurry out.*]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*Outside.*] Hi! Hi!

VALENTINE WHITE.

That fellow was born to hail an omnibus.

[IMOGEN *appears.*]

IMOGEN.

[*Not seeing* VALENTINE.] Will he be long? [*She encounters him.*] Oh! You are not neglecting your duties, I hope, Valentine?

VALENTINE WHITE.

I shall follow the others in the cart. Your note was marked "urgent."

IMOGEN.

Was it?

VALENTINE WHITE.

[*Showing her letter.*] "Urgent."

IMOGEN.

What a thoughtless habit it is to mark all one's

letters "urgent." All I wanted to say to you is this—but it isn't urgent.

VALENTINE WHITE.

No, no—I understand that.

IMOGEN.

I merely had a foolish desire to be the first to acquaint you of my—undeserved happiness.

VALENTINE WHITE.

What happiness don't you deserve?

IMOGEN.

The happiness of becoming Lady Colin Macphail, Valentine.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Oh. Is that—all?

IMOGEN.

That's all—just at present.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Hah! You'll be a fine lady now, past recovery.

IMOGEN.

I shall endeavour to adequately fill the station of life to which fate has called me.

VALENTINE WHITE.

All that sweet simplicity of yours in London was purely an assumption, I suppose?

IMOGEN.

Things are—what they appear.

VALENTINE WHITE.

But you have your heart's desire at last, I presume?

IMOGEN.

I—I presume I have.

VALENTINE WHITE.

[*Burying his head in his hands.*] Oh!

IMOGEN.

What are you going to do next?

VALENTINE WHITE.

Japan.

IMOGEN.

Nice part of Japan?

VALENTINE WHITE.

The murderous districts.

IMOGEN.

Oh! Then you don't propose to—return alive?

VALENTINE WHITE.

Not according to my present arrangements.

IMOGEN.

You—you had better follow the shooters to Claigrossie now.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Certainly.

IMOGEN.

I am glad to have had this gossip over our pros-

pects. We—we both seem to be doing well. Good-morning.

[*She offers her hand, which he takes ungraciously.*]

VALENTINE WHITE.

Good-morning.

IMOGEN.

You haven't congratulated me yet—in the usual way.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Will you be happy with—him?

IMOGEN.

I think—partially.

VALENTINE WHITE.

But you're not going to partially marry Sir Colin. How dare you do this?

IMOGEN.

He was the first to ask me, Val.

VALENTINE WHITE.

The first to ask you! You don't mean to suggest that any other man would have done!

IMOGEN.

No—not *any* other.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Some other?

IMOGEN.

It's too late now—but yes.

VALENTINE WHITE.

A poor man?

IMOGEN.

Val!

VALENTINE WHITE.

Would *I* have stood the remotest chance?

IMOGEN.

It's too late now.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Would I? Would I?

IMOGEN.

No. Nor any other nineteenth century savage.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Savage!

IMOGEN.

Mr. White, it is very much too late now; but why, when you returned to England, didn't you wear uncomfortable clothes like other gentlemen, and a very high collar, and varnished boots, like other gentlemen?

VALENTINE WHITE.

Why? Because I cannot be false to my principles.

IMOGEN.

People say that principles which deal too much with the outside of things are nothing but affectations.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Imogen!

IMOGEN.

If a man has a good heart he should have a good hat.

VALENTINE WHITE.

Imogen—Jenny! If I had ever come to you—in a good hat——

IMOGEN.

If you had, then when mamma urged me to marry perhaps she would not have blamed me for——

VALENTINE WHITE.

For what?

IMOGEN.

For liking some pleasant-looking gentleman who laughed at harmless follies instead of scolding them.

VALENTINE WHITE.

And now?

IMOGEN.

Now! Now—it is too late.

[*She falls into his arms; he embraces her.*]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*Outside.*] Hi, hi! Come here! hi!

IMOGEN.

Ah!

[*She breaks from* VALENTINE *and runs out, as* LEBANON *enters, very pale and upset.*]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*Clinging to* VALENTINE.] Old fellow!

VALENTINE WHITE.

What's the matter with you?

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Gurrrh! You—you're wanted!

[LADY TWOMBLEY *enters.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Good gracious!

VALENTINE WHITE.

Something has happened, I'm afraid.

[VALENTINE *goes out.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*To* LEBANON.] You're ill!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

I'm upset.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Too much breakfast!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

No. I—I've peppered Macphail.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Peppered him! Can't you take your mind off eating?

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

You don't understand. I was in the wagonette, tellin' 'em the story of Tom Bolter and those beastly ducks. I got 'old of a beastly gun and just as I

was demonstrating how I shot the fifteen beastly birds——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

It went off!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Well! Don't make such a fuss about it!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Ah! and it was pointed at Sir Colin!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Pointed at him! No! His legs were stuck right in the way.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Heavens!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Be quiet! Make light of it—make light of it, like I do!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Now, now I hope you're content!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

No, I'm not. I wouldn't have had this 'appen for 'alf a sovereign. This 'Ighland 'oliday of mine is gettin' on my nerves.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Your nerves!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Yes, Lady T. Imagine what it must mean to a shy man to spend a rollickin' August with a lot

of people whose chief occupation is staring at the tips of their own aquiline noses.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Hysterically.*] Ha, ha, ha!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Imagine what it must be to a shy man to find himself always leading the conversation, instead of following it with a sparkling comment or two, as I'm in the 'abit of doin' in my own circle. Think of me starting every topic and arguing on it till my throat's sore; making every joke and roaring at it till I get blood to the head. Sometimes when I'm in the middle of a long story and not a soul listening I feel so lonely I—I could almost cry.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Then out of your own sufferings why can't you find some compassion for mine?

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

It's pathetic—that's what my position is—it's dooced pathetic.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

In mercy's name why don't you retire quietly to your room and pack?

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

What! Throw up the sponge?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

You needn't throw up your sponge—*pack* your sponge.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

I understand, Lady T—hook it!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

"Hook it" is a harsh way of putting it. Bring your visit to a close. Think of what you are losing here! Think of Margate, where I feel you must have many dear friends!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

I—I've half a mind to.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Ha! Bless you, Mr. Lebanon, bless you! I'll fetch you a Bradshaw.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Stop! I forgot the hop.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

The hop?

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

There's a ball here to-morrow night.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

For heaven's sake, don't wait for the hop.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

I had half-a-dozen lessons in the Scotch Reel before I left town.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

And you would risk the Reel on half-a-dozen lessons! Madman!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Half-a-dozen lessons at store prices. Dash it all, you wouldn't 'ave me waste 'em!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Hopeless!

[SIR JULIAN *enters unobserved by* LEBANON *or* LADY TWOMBLEY.]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Look 'ere, Lady T! I'm sorry to disappoint a lady, but it ain't Mr. Joseph Lebanon's principle to do something for nothing.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

No. If you lent a lady your arm you'd do it at interest.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

I'm not alludin' to our pleasant financial relationship, Lady T. What I infer is that if after the forthcoming hop I drag myself away from my sorrowin' friends at Drumdurris I expect a—ah—a solatium. [SIR JULIAN *remains watching and listening.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

A what?

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Lady T, my pride has been wounded in this 'ouse—my self-respect has been 'urt.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Ha, ha, ha! Pardon me, I'm hysterical.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

If you could 'eal my feelings by rendering me a service——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

To be rid of you?

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Oh, Lady T, 'ow plainly you put it! Well, yes.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Try me. [SIR JULIAN *disappears suddenly.*]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

'Ush! Thought I 'eard somebody. Lady T, you are aware that Mr. Joseph Lebanon's position in the financial world is an eminent one.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I wasn't aware of it.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Take it from me, Lady T, take it from me. But that distinguished position might be advanced by the success of some delicate little financial operations which I'm on the brink of, Lady Twombley, on the brink of. Lady T, if I could know twenty-four hours in advance of the prying newspapers the decision of the Government on the Rajputana Canal Question it would go far to 'eal the wound my self-respect has received in this *recherché* 'Ighland 'ome. You follow me, Lady T?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I suppose you mean that when the decision of

the Government is known in the City something or other will go up and something or other will go down on the Stock Exchange? Is that it?

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

That's it, Lady T, that's it! And some fellers will make fortunes! Oh, Lady T!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

But why do you bother a poor woman with a headache——

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Because without the gentle guidance of tender-hearted woman I can't find out whether the Government is going to grant the concession for the cutting of the Rajputana Canal. Oh, Lady Twombley, let me 'ave five minutes alone with Sir Julian's papers in Sir Julian's room.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Mr. Lebanon!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Two minutes! A stroll round. I'll go in with a duster and tidy up.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Or give me a glimpse of some of the documents Mr. Melton brought with him in that box yesterday.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I want some fresh air!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Wait! If you'll do this for me I'll clear out of Drumdurris with Fanny on Thursday morning.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Ah, no!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

And I'll hand you back your acceptances—every-one of 'em—I will—on my word of honour as a gentleman!

[*She seizes him by the throat and shakes him violently.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

How dare you! How dare you tempt me!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*Arranging his hair and moustache with his pocket comb and mirror.*] Oh, ladies are trying in business—they are dooced trying.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

You—you wretch! Do you think I haven't endured enough for the past three months without this? Oh, pa, what will you say to your Kitty when you know the disgrace she's brought on you! Oh, my chicks, my chicks, my blessed chicks!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Lady Twombley, my pride has been wounded, my self-respect has been 'urt in this *recherché* 'Igh-land 'ome for, I 'ope, the last time. I shall retire from the hop early to-morrow night and hook it—bring my visit to a close—on Thursday morning.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Thank you.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Next week the first bit of paper bearin' the honoured name of woman falls doo.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

I repeat the word, d-u-e, doo.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Mr. Lebanon!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Our interview has been a distressin' one, Lady Twombley. It is over.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Mr. Lebanon! Mr. Lebanon! [*He turns his chair from her. To herself.*] It's all up with me. I—I'll go and find pa, and tell him. There's no help for it—I'll tell him. Mr. Lebanon! For the last time—have compassion on a poor fool of a woman! [*He turns away.*] Oh! I'll go to pa's room and—tell him. [*She goes out.*]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

That's one way to the old gentleman's room. [*He opens the door and listens.*] Ah! what's the latest quotation for lovely woman's weakness?

[VALENTINE *enters with* MRS. GAYLUSTRE *and* MACPHAIL, *who looks very scared, has a handkerchief bound round his knee, and leans on* MRS. GAYLUSTRE'S *arm. She supports him to a chair.*]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*To* SIR COLIN.] Lean on your poor broken-hearted friend.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*To himself.*] Oh, the dooce!

VALENTINE WHITE.

I'll find Lady Macphail. [*He goes out.*]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*Whispering to* LEBANON.] Get out of sight!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*Quietly to her.*] Can't. I must wait here—I've got an important little affair on.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

So have I. Leave us!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Oh, my goodness, how selfish you are, Fanny!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Selfish! you'll ruin my prospects in life! Brute!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Vixen!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Bah!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Bah!

[LEBANON *goes out.* MRS. GAYLUSTRE *throws herself on her knees beside* MACPHAIL.]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

How do you feel now?

MACPHAIL.

Well, its tingling.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Tingling! You bear it like a hero.

MACPHAIL.

I appreciate the compliment, but I'm thinking I'm only a bit singed.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Ah, but why, why do you indulge in these reckless sports?

MACPHAIL.

I was merely sitting in the drag looking at the sky.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Sitting in the drag looking at the sky! How foolhardy!

MACPHAIL.

Whereupon your brother, without a word of warning, blazed away at my knee.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Ah, don't describe it! Suppose you had had your head on your knee!

LADY MACPHAIL.

[*Outside.*] Take me to Colin!

MACPHAIL.

My mother!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*To herself.*] Drat your mother.

[*She stands with her handkerchief to her eyes.* LADY MACPHAIL *enters with* EGIDIA, *the* DOWAGER, LADY EUPHEMIA, *and* VALENTINE.]

EGIDIA.

Sir Colin!

DOWAGER.

[*Sitting at writing-table.*] I'll telegraph to Sir George McHarness, the surgeon.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Now let the wail of the lament waken the echoes of black Ben-Muchty!

MACPHAIL.

[*Rising from the chair.*] It's not at all necessary, mother.

EGIDIA.

He can stand!

DOWAGER.

[*Writing.*] "Bring—chloroform—and knives."

LADY MACPHAIL.

Ah, Colin, lad, why did we ever quit the gray shores of Loch-na-Doich?

MACPHAIL.

I'll go upstairs and bathe my knee, mother.

[LADY MACPHAIL *leads him.*]

EGIDIA.

He can walk!

LADY MACPHAIL

Madam, a Macphail can always walk under any circumstances.

DOWAGER.

[*Reading the telegram she has written.*] "If—in—doubt—amputate."

[LADY MACPHAIL, MACPHAIL, VALENTINE, LADY EUPHEMIA, EGIDIA, *and the* DOWAGER *go out.*]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*Weeping till the others are out of sight.*] Joseph will die of remorse! [*Calling.*] The coast is clear, Joseph. Jo!

[*As she goes out* LADY TWOMBLEY *enters in great agitation, clutching an important-looking document.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Kitty, what have you done! Kitty, what have you done!

[LEBANON *enters.*]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Lady T! Thought so! [*Seeing the paper.*] Oh my goodness, what has she got there?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I must—I must find Julian! Oh!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*Snatching the paper from her.*] Excuse me!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Ah! give me back that paper!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Lady T, oh, Lady T!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Following him round the table.*] Give me back that paper! Dear, sweet Mr. Lebanon!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*Reading the paper.*] Ha!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Ah! don't read it!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

My friend Sir Julian's own writing! The Rajputana Canal is a blessed fact! Lady Twombley, I forget my wounded pride, I forgive the blow to my self-respect. You have won a place in Jo Lebanon's heart.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Give me back that paper and forget it!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*Returning the paper.*] Give it you back? Delighted. Forget it? Oh, Lady T, Lady T.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Devil!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Lady Twombley, Joseph Lebanon is, above all things, a man of honour. [*Handing Bills to* LADY TWOMBLEY.] Lovely woman's Acceptances.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I won't take them. I won't buy them back at such a price.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Natural delicacy. [*Laying the Bills on the table.*] You can pick 'em up when I'm gone.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh, what a wicked woman I am!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

I can get out of these beastly clothes, drive to Strachlachan Junction, and wire to town before feedin' time. The city is on the eve of a financial earthquake! Joseph's name will be a 'ouse'old word from Mile End to Kensington! Lady Twombley, we meet at the hop to-morrow night for the last time—in Society. [*Boisterously.*] Whoop! Dash Society! [*He performs a few steps of a Highland dance.*] Excuse my humour. [*He goes out.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

The Bills! The Bills! They mustn't lie there.

[*As she goes to the table* SIR JULIAN, *looking very white and dishevelled, enters, and, standing opposite to her, takes up the Bills and presents them to her.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Pa!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Lady Twombley!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh, my gracious!

[*She drops on her hands and knees at* SIR JULIAN'S *feet.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

You've found me out, pa! You've found me out!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I have found you out.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

How did you manage it?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

By degrading myself to the position of an eavesdropper.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

That's pretty mean, pa—ain't it?

[*Seeing that he is examining the Bills she puts up her hands and seizes them.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Ah! Don't tot 'em up! Don't tot 'em up!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Katherine, when I first saw you, three-and-twenty years ago, you were standing over a tub in the tiled

yard of your father's farm wringing out your little sister's pinafores.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Weeping.*] Oh-h-h!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Could I have looked forward I should have known that you would one day wring my feelings as you do now.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Pa, I've fallen into the hands of the unscrupulous.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Woman!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh, don't call me that, pa!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

The unscrupulous! You have lost the right to ever again use that serviceable word.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

What do you mean?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

How do you come by those Bills?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Julian, you know! [*Going toward him on her knees frantically.*] Ah, don't stare like that! [*Putting her arms round him.*] Husband! Dear husband, you are glaring like an idiot! Listen! [*She shakes him violently.*] Listen! When that reptile tempted me I ran upstairs intending to tell you all.

I did. Oh, pa, don't stare at nothing! I knocked at your door; there was a drumming in my ears, and I fancied your voice answered me telling me to enter. Oh, try winking, pa, try winking! Your room was empty—left unguarded, the door unlocked. I entered. Wink, pa; for mercy's sake, wink! I sank into a chair to wait for your coming, [*Taking the written paper from her pocket.*] and there, on your table, right before my eyes, I saw this thing like a white ghost.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

A memorandum in my writing that the concession for the Rajputana Canal is to be granted.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Yes, yes. I tried to forget it was there. But the chairs and tables seemed to dance before me and every object in the room had a voice crying out, "Kitty, you silly woman, get back your Bills from that demon who is plaguing you!" I put my fingers in my ears and then the voices were shut up in my brain, and still they shrieked, "Kitty, get back your Bills! Get back your Bills!" I snatched up this paper and ran from the room. Even then if I had met you, Julian, I should have been safe; but whenever Old Nick wants to play the deuce with a married lady he begins by taking her husband for a stroll, and so I fell into Lebanon's clutches—and I —I—I'm done for! [*She sinks into a chair.*]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Katherine, those Bills must be returned to the creature, Lebanon.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Yes. And—and—pa, dear, you'll never speak kindly to me after this, will you?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I trust I shall be invariably polite to you, Katherine.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh-h-h! We shall be whitewashed in the Bankruptcy Court eventually, I suppose?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

All in good time, Katherine.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

And then—what then?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Then we must hope for a cottage, and a small garden where we can grow our own vegetables and learn wisdom.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Our—own—vegetables. And years hence, pa, sometimes when I am sitting over my knitting, you'll forget the past, and play your flute again, and be happy?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Katherine! [*He takes his flute from his pocket and breaks it into pieces across his knee.*] Never, never again, Katherine. [*As he is leaving her.*] One pang of remorse I can spare you, Katherine.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Don't!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

You believe you have betrayed a solemn secret of the Government to that unprincipled money-lender.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Of course.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

That you have *not* done.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Pa!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

No, Katherine. Overhearing his shameful proposition, and fearing your weakness, I had time to hasten to my room, conceal all important papers, and scribble the memorandum you abstracted.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Why, then——

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

That writing records the exact reverse of the truth.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

And—and Joseph?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

In the language of the vulgar—Mr. Lebanon is sold. [*He goes out.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Julian! Ah! [*Staring at the paper.*] The exact reverse of the truth! Then the Rajputana Canal—— Julian, why should you be first blackened and then whitewashed because of your vagabond wife? A cottage — our own vegetables! Never! Why shouldn't *I* have *my* delicate little financial operations in the City? Oh, my gracious!

[DRUMDURRIS *and* BROOKE *enter.*]

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Hullo, Mater—what!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Brooke! Keith! You boys must drive me over to Strachlachan Junction. I must telegraph to London backwards and forwards all day. Keith, put me into communication with your Stockbroker in town!

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Aunt!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Silence! I'm on the brink of some delicate little financial operations! [*To* BROOKE.] Get out the cart!

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

The drag's outside.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Come on!

[LEBANON *enters hastily.*]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Hi, Drumdurris! Let me 'ave a carriage to go to Strachlachan Junction. I want to wire to town.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Do you? So do we. We'll give you a lift. Come on! [*They all hurry out.*]

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

THE FOURTH ACT.

Dancing.

The scene is still the inner hall of Drumdurris Castle, now brilliantly lighted and florally decorated, the evening after the events of the previous act.

Waltz-music is heard, then a slight scream, and Lebanon, *in full Highland costume, enters hastily.*

Mr. Joseph Lebanon.

I wouldn't 'ave 'ad it 'appen for 'alf a sovereign.

[The Munkittrick, *a fiery old gentleman in Highland dress, enters.*]

The Munkittrick.

Sir, I am most indignant!

Mr. Joseph Lebanon.

I've explained. I felt myself goin' and I caught at what came nearest.

The Munkittrick.

My daughter came nearest.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

I know. Don't make such a fuss about it! Do remember we're at a ball!

THE MUNKITTRICK.

Miss Munkittrick is torn to ribbons.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

All right. Make light of it—make light of it, like I do.

THE MUNKITTRICK.

Ah-h-h!

[DRUMDURRIS, *in Highland dress, enters with* MISS MUNKITTRICK, *who is much discomposed, and* EGIDIA, *who is soothing her.*]

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

[*To* MUNKITTRICK.] My dear sir!

MISS MUNKITTRICK.

Papa!

EGIDIA.

Oh, Flora, Flora!

THE MUNKITTRICK.

Lord Drumdurris!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Let it blow over. We're all forgettin' we're at a ball.

THE MUNKITTRICK.

Miss Munkittrick has been rolled upon the floor.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

She was passin' at the time—I didn't select her. Don't be so conceited!

[LEBANON *continues to explain.* MUNKITTRICK *is indignant;* DRUMDURRIS *endeavors to soothe him.* BROOKE *enters carrying a satin shoe, which he presents to* MISS MUNKITTRICK.]

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Awfully sorry—what? [BROOKE *hurries out.*]

MISS MUNKITTRICK.

Where is papa?

[IMOGEN *enters, carrying an aigrette.*]

IMOGEN.

Oh, Miss Munkittrick, what a shocking mishap! [*They fasten the aigrette in* MISS MUNKITTRICK'S *hair.*]

MISS MUNKITTRICK.

Have you seen my papa?

[LADY EUPHEMIA, *carrying a sash, hurries in as* IMOGEN *goes off.* MISS MUNKITTRICK *rises;* LADY EUPHEMIA *and* EGIDIA *adjust the sash hastily.*]

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

[*Adjusting the sash.*] My dear Flora, this is *too* unfortunate!

[BROOKE *re-enters with another shoe.*]

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

The other—what! [*To* LADY EUPHEMIA.] There are some more pieces—come and help.

[BROOKE *and* LADY EUPHEMIA *hurry out.*]

MISS MUNKITTRICK.

I want my papa! [*Seeing* MUNKITTRICK.] Ah!

THE MUNKITTRICK.

[*Giving her his arm.*] Flora, we'll go home.

MISS MUNKITTRICK.

Papa, I'm not nearly *all.*

[*Her aigrette is very much on one side, her sash is trailing, and she limps away carrying one slipper.*]

EGIDIA.

Pray don't think of going!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Let it blow over!

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

My dear sir!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Oh, very well, you're losing the best of the ball.

[THE MUNKITTRICK *and* MISS MUNKITTRICK *go out, followed by* EGIDIA *and* DRUMDURRIS. IMOGEN, LADY EUPHEMIA, *and* BROOKE *enter hastily, each carrying a fragment of* MISS MUNKITTRICK'S *dress.*]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

[*Taking the remnants.*] Allow me—allow me—my affair.

[IMOGEN, LADY EUPHEMIA, *and* BROOKE *go out.* LEBANON *crams the pieces of* MISS MUNKITTRICK'S *dress under a chair cushion.*]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Let it blow over. Where's my partner?

[*He goes out.* MACPHAIL *enters with* MRS. GAYLUSTRE *upon his arm.*]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Staying out is infinitely preferable to dancing, is it not, dear Sir Colin?

MACPHAIL.

Aye. I hate dancing.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

But your dear mother says you resemble some beautiful wild thing when you dance the Strathspey.

MACPHAIL.

That's because I hate it; the Strathspey's enough to make a lad wild.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Witty boy!

MACPHAIL.

Eh, do you think I'm naturally quick?

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Quick?

MACPHAIL.

Quick in my understanding?

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

I'm sure of it.

MACPHAIL.

Eh, I'm glad you think I'm quick.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Why?

MACPHAIL.

Because Ballocheevin—that's our place, you understand—Ballocheevin is enough to soften a lad's brain.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Then why hide your light at Ballocheevin?

MACPHAIL.

Well, the Macphails have lived there since eleven hundred and two.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

How romantic!

MACPHAIL.

So mother's just got out of the way of moving.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Charming attachment to an old home.

MACPHAIL.

Aye, it's old. It hasn't been papered and done up since Robert Bruce stayed with us.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Robert Bruce!

MACPHAIL.

Aye—just from a Saturday till Monday, I'm thinking.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

There must be a legend attached to every stone of Ballocheevin.

MACPHAIL.

Aye, it's interesting—but it requires papering. I am so tired of Ballocheevin.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

But you love the rugged country, the vast overwhelming hills, and the placid lochs?

MACPHAIL.

Mother's been telling you that.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Isn't it true?

MACPHAIL.

Eh, I am just weary of my native scenery.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

But what about the misty chasms of Ben-Muchty?

MACPHAIL.

That's an awfully damp place. That's where I caught my bad cold.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

And the gray shore of Loch-na-Doich? Your mother says you adore it.

MACPHAIL.

Eh, I am sick of Loch-na-Doich.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

And your feet don't ache to press the heather?

MACPHAIL.

It's when they're *on* the heather my feet ache. It's poor walking, heather.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Then you don't watch the sun rise from the jagged summit of Ben-na-fechan?

MACPHAIL.

[*Cunningly.*] Eh, but I do though, every day when I'm at home.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

But why?

MACPHAIL.

To get away from mother.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Poor boy!

MACPHAIL.

[*Reflectively.*] I've been thinking——

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Yes?

MACPHAIL.

That you'd better let go my arm now.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Sir Colin!

MACPHAIL.

I've no personal objection, you understand; but mother's always looking for me.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

How thoughtless I am! [*He walks away.*] Sir Colin!

MACPHAIL.

Aye?

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Your mother is driving you to contract this marriage with Miss Twombley.

MACPHAIL.

Well, mother's just making the arrangements.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Your great heart hasn't gone out to her! Unhappiness must ensue! Your bright career will be dimmed!

MACPHAIL.

Will be *what?*

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Dimmed. What did you think I said? Oh, Sir Colin, don't carry this unsuitable bride to Ballocheevin!

MACPHAIL.

Well, it's a serious step; but I've been thinking it would be another in the house.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

You don't want another in the house. You need a strong, self-reliant wife who will take you out of the house.

MACPHAIL.

Eh?

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

A woman, loving but firm, tender but enterprising, who will bear you from your dilapidated home and plunge you into the vortex of some great city. [*Suddenly.*] Have you ever been to Paris?

MACPHAIL.

No.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

I know every inch of it!

MACPHAIL.

Madam!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Oh, what have I said! Sir Colin, you have guessed my secret!

[MACPHAIL *produces his ball-programme from his stocking and refers to it.*]

MACPHAIL.

I'm engaged to Miss Kilbouie for this waltz, if you'll excuse me.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*Holding out her hand to him.*] Colin.

MACPHAIL.

I'm thinking mother will be wondering——

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*To herself.*] Drat your moth—— [*To* MACPHAIL.] Never mind dear Lady Macphail for a moment. Colin, since you have discovered my love for you I will make no further reservation——

MACPHAIL.

But mother——

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*Under her breath.*] Drat your—— [*To* MACPHAIL.] Colin, I will be to you the wife you have described.

MACPHAIL.

I'm extremely obliged to ye—but——

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Hush, bold boy! [*She gives him a card.*]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

You know my cruel brother takes me back to town to-morrow. Here is my address so that you may write to me constantly, devotedly.

MACPHAIL.

[*Reading the card.*] "Mauricette & Cie., Court Dressmakers——"

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*Snatching the card from him.*] That's a wrong 'un—I mean, that's a mistake. [*Giving another.*] There. Hide it away, dear one—nearest your heart. [*He slips it into his stocking.*]

MACPHAIL.

Oh!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

And now, as I start in the morning at nine-forty-five, sharp, on the tick, we must say farewell. Oh, this parting is too cruel. Colin!

[*She falls against him.*]

MACPHAIL.

Here's my mother! [*He throws her off.*]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

[*Under her breath.*] Drat your mother!

[LADY MACPHAIL *enters.*]

LADY MACPHAIL.

Madam. [*To* MACPHAIL.] Why do you leave the ball-room, my lad?

MACPHAIL.

I've been just watching the moonlight on Loch Auchentoshan.

LADY MACPHAIL.

I am proud to see this devotion to Loch Auchentoshan, but to-night you have other duties almost equally important. After this paltry waltz we lose ourselves in the wild pleasures of our native dance.

MACPHAIL.

The Strathspey? [*He takes* MRS. GAYLUSTRE'S *card from his stocking.*] Oh! [*Hides it and produces his ball-programme from his other stocking.*] The Strathspey.

LADY MACPHAIL.

Come, lad. They have yet to see the Macphail lead the Strathspey with his betrothed.

[*They go out together.*]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Yes, and they shall ultimately see the Macphail writing love-letters to Fanny—love-letters with a promise of marriage in 'em. I'll consult a solicitor directly I reach town and be ready to marry or to sue him. Oh, Fanny, Fanny, ungrateful girl, what a lot you have to be thankful for!

[*She runs out and* ANGÈLE *peeps in.*]

ANGÈLE.

Milord! Miladi! [*She enters.*] I must find miladi! Miladi!

[LADY TWOMBLEY *enters.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

No news from Reeves & Shuckleback, the Stock-brokers. The waiting for it will finish me!

ANGÈLE.

Oh, Miladi Twombley.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Turning to her sharply.*] Ah!

ANGÈLE.

Tell me, vere is milord?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

What! Has a messenger come from Strachlachan with a telegram for Lord Drumdurris? Speak?

ANGÈLE.

I do not know.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh!

ANGÈLE.

But, oh, miladi, I 'ave been a vicked girl!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I dare say you have—that's your business.

ANGÈLE.

Miladi, ze leetle Lord Aberbrothock is indispose.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

The baby?

ANGÈLE.

Yees. To please milord, and contrary to miladi's ordares, I put Lord Aberbrothock to bed wiz his gun.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I know—I'm a mother—the child has swallowed the paint!

ANGÈLE.

Ah, yees!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Send a groom to Strachlachan for Dr. M'Gubbie.

ANGÈLE.

Yees, miladi.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Angèle!

ANGÈLE.

Miladi?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Tell the man to inquire at Strachlachan for telegrams for the Castle.

ANGÈLE.

Yees, miladi. [ANGÈLE *runs out.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh, for a telegram from Reeves & Shuckleback! My diamonds, my double row of pearls for a telegram from Reeves & Shuckleback!

[EGIDIA *enters with* ANGÈLE, *followed by* DRUMDURRIS.]

EGIDIA.

Lady Twombley!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Has Keith had a telegram?

EGIDIA.

A telegram—no. My son is ill!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Oh, I know—he has nibbled his gun.

EGIDIA.

His gun!

ANGÈLE.

Yees, miladi.

EGIDIA.

Ah! The Army! [*To* DRUMDURRIS.] So you have gained your own ends after all, Keith, and my boy has fallen.

[EGIDIA *goes out, followed by* ANGÈLE. DRUMDURRIS *sinks into a chair.*]

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Keith.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Don't speak to me, please, aunt.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I must. Reeves & Shuckleback are strangely silent.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Let them remain so—I care not.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

You don't care! Surely you are anxious to know whether you have been instrumental in saving me from—from growing my own vegetables?

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Growing your own——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Surely you want to know whether you have made me a wealthy woman or have ruined yourself in the effort?

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Ruined myself!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Keith, dear, I am afraid I haven't done what is strictly regular, but when you put me into communication with your Stockbrokers I carried on my delicate little financial operations with them in your name.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Aunt Kate!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Keith, you're annoyed!

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

May I ask what delicate little financial operations?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I've speculated on the strength of my private

knowledge of the decision of the Government on the Rajputana Canal Question—I mean *you* have speculated.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Aunt Twombley, how dare you do such a thing?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

How dare I! Boy—for you are little more—boy, you wouldn't have a Cabinet Minister's wife take advantage of her confidential acquaintance with her husband's official affairs to advance her own interests! Oh, Keith!

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

But you've done it!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

No, I haven't. Don't be so dull, *you've* done it.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

And if your delicate little financial operations——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

If they come off, you have made what you men call a pile, Keith. All through your blundering aunty you will have made a pile.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Which I hand over to you, Aunt Kate?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I shall borrow it, Keith, dear—may I?

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

And if—pardon the question—if your delicate little financial operations——

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Don't come off?

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Certainly; if they don't come off, what then?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Then through your reckless speculation you will have impoverished your estate for the rest of your life!

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Aunt!

[EGIDIA *enters.*]

EGIDIA.

Keith!

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Tell me.

EGIDIA.

Fergus has taken a turn for the better.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Egidia, how can I look you in the face?

EGIDIA.

Cannot we read a lesson from this dreadful occurrence?

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

To reconcile our views?

EGIDIA.

Finally. You see now how unfitted our son is to a soldier's life.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Yes, I have been wrong. Happily it is not too late to remould his character. We must return to the ball-room.

EGIDIA.

First come with me and peep into the nursery.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

By all means—the nursery.

TOGETHER.

The nursery.

[*They go out as the* DOWAGER *enters.*]

DOWAGER.

Katherine!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Dora?

DOWAGER.

I am beside myself! Have you heard the news?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

News? Telegrams for Keith?

DOWAGER.

I know nothing about telegrams. I've just overheard Julian talking solemnly to Brooke. Do you know what your husband intends to do?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Grow his own vegetables.

DOWAGER.

Bother his vegetables! He resigns his place in the Ministry.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

The same thing. [*To herself.*] Ah, why can't he wait!

[SIR JULIAN *enters with* BROOKE.]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Katherine, I have been telling Brooke of the change in his prospects.

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

I say, Mater, such a blow—what!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Pa, why can't you wait?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Wait—for what, Katherine?

DOWAGER.

Wait till the boy can patch up his future with a wealthy wife, of course.

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Really, Dora, I don't think it would be absolutely fair——

DOWAGER.

Fair! People's actions are like their heads of hair—they can be dyed flaxen. [*To* BROOKE.] Boy,

why do you let the grass grow under your pumps in this way?

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

I haven't let the grass grow, Aunt Dora. I—ah—I have the happiness to be engaged—what!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Engaged!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Bless my soul!

DOWAGER.

In mercy's name, to whom?

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

To Effie.

LADY TWOMBLEY and SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Euphemia!

DOWAGER.

Euphemia! Why, how dare you conspire to entrap a child of mine into a moneyless marriage?

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

My dear Dora, you yourself suggested——

DOWAGER.

If I may be guilty of such an expression—fall-lall!

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

But, aunt——

DOWAGER.

Hold your tongue, sir! Ah, I believe you all have abominable motives!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*To herself.*] The telegram! The telegram! Why is there no telegram?

[*The music of the Strathspey is heard.* IMOGEN *enters with* LADY EUPHEMIA.]

DOWAGER.

Euphemia!

[LADY EUPHEMIA *joins the others.* IMOGEN *goes to* LADY TWOMBLEY *in agitation.*]

IMOGEN.

Mamma! The Strathspey!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

What of it?

IMOGEN.

I'm engaged to dance it with Sir Colin. Oh, mamma, I don't love him!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Child, you loved him the other night while your head was being washed.

IMOGEN.

I didn't see clearly then—the egg-julep was in my eyes. But now Lady Macphail is running after me, from one room to another, because she declares I must fulfil the destiny of a Macphail's betrothed and lead the Strathspey by his side. But I won't dance a deception before a room full of people!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Imogen, there is nothing for you but this marriage or contemptible, cleanly poverty.

IMOGEN.

Poverty!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Child, you are young to be told these things—but what do you think is likely to happen to pa and me?

IMOGEN.

Mamma, keep nothing from me.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

In all probability we shall grow our own vegetables.

IMOGEN.

Oh! What for?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

For dinner. And, oh, Imogen, have pity on your mother! I can face contemptible, cleanly poverty with pa alone, but if I see my innocent chicks sharing our miseries every cabbage in our garden will grow up with a broken heart!

[*She embraces* IMOGEN. LADY MACPHAIL *enters with* MACPHAIL.]

LADY MACPHAIL.

Miss Twombley, Lord Drumdurris's guests are politely waiting till you are pleased to lead the Strathspey with the Macphail.

MACPHAIL.

Miss Twombley.

IMOGEN.

[*Quietly to* LADY TWOMBLEY.] Mamma!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*To herself.*] No telegram from town. [To IMOGEN.] Imogen, you had better not lose your dance.

[*With a slight courtesy to* MACPHAIL, IMOGEN *gives him her arm as* VALENTINE *enters, trimmed, shaven, and in immaculate evening dress.*]

BROOKE TWOMBLEY.

Why, Val!

LADY EUPHEMIA VIBART.

Mr. White!

VALENTINE WHITE.

Imogen!

IMOGEN.

[*Leaving* MACPHAIL.] Valentine!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Valentine White!

VALENTINE WHITE.

Imogen, am I too late?

IMOGEN.

Too late?

VALENTINE WHITE.

For the honor of dancing with you to-night?

IMOGEN.

You—you are in time, Valentine.

VALENTINE WHITE.

For which dance?

IMOGEN.

This dance.

MACPHAIL.

Mother!

DOWAGER.

The child's mad!

LADY MACPHAIL.

Stop the Strathspey! Stop the Strathspey!
[*She hurries out, followed by* MACPHAIL.]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Mr. White, really you shouldn't, you know.
[*The music ceases.*]

VALENTINE WHITE.

Sir Julian, Lady Twombley, with your permission I shall go no further to avoid the shams of life. I have found one cool resting-place in this world where there is reality and sincerity. [*With* IMOGEN's *hands in his.*] And I have found it in an advanced state of civilization.
[*The* DOWAGER *pulls* IMOGEN *away.*]

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

I positively must beg——

DOWAGER.

[*To* IMOGEN.] Child, at this moment I feel grateful that I am your aunt, with all an aunt's privileges. [*She shakes her.*]

IMOGEN.

Mamma!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

[*Seizing* IMOGEN.] My chick, your mother has privileges also. Bless you and Valentine. [*Kissing*

her.] There ! Dora, if you shake my girl again I—I'll slap you !

DOWAGER.

Ah ! Julian !

[DRUMDURRIS *appears with a telegram.*]

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

Aunt !

LADY TWOMBLEY.

What's that ?

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

From Reeves & Shuckleback !

[*She snatches the telegram from him.*]

EVERYBODY.

What's the matter ?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Julian, look at your wife ! Brooke, Imogen, come to your mother ! No more worries by day and bad dreams at night ! No poverty—no cottage—no—no vegetables ! I—I am a rich woman !

[*She falls back fainting into* SIR JULIAN'S *arms as they all surround her. At the same moment* LEBANON *rushes in with* MRS. GAYLUSTRE. *He has a telegram in his hand ; his aspect is wild, his face white.*]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Lady Twombley ! Where is she ? Lady Twombley !

[*As* LADY TWOMBLEY *is assisted to a chair* LEBANON *falls into another.*]

IMOGEN.

Mamma!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Joseph!

IMOGEN.

Ah!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Ah!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Be quiet! Lady Twombley is ill!

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Ill! Look at Joseph! My only brother!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Keith, explain this telegram or my brain will give way.

DOWAGER.

No, no—tell me. My brain is stronger than Sir Julian's.

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

[*To* SIR JULIAN *and the* DOWAGER *apart.*] Mother—Sir Julian——

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

I want a word or two with my friend, Lady T.

[MRS. GAYLUSTRE *arranges his chair so that he faces* LADY TWOMBLEY. *She and* LEBANON *stare at each other.*]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Oh!

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Ah!

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Lady T.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Hullo?

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

I've 'ad a wire.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

So have I.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

From Moss & Emanuel, my brokers.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Mine is from Reeves & Shuckleback.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Oh, I see—*your* brokers. You've done me, Lady T.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Don't mention it.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

You're a knowing one.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I'm sure I'm very gratified to hear you say so.

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

The Bills! Give me the Bills you swindled me out of!

[*He advances violently, but* MRS. GAYLUSTRE *holds him back.* LADY TWOMBLEY *hands the Bills to* SIR JULIAN.]

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Jo!

SIR JULIAN TWOMBLEY.

Mr. Lebanon, the Bills, sir. [*Giving them.*]

[LEBANON *snaps his fingers demonstratively in* SIR JULIAN'S *face.*]

MR. JOSEPH LEBANON.

Drum., thank you for your *recherché* hospitality. Carriage to the station in the morning, if you please. [*Kissing his hands.*] Ladies—— [*Breaking down.*] Oh, Fanny, take me to bed!

[*He goes out.* MRS. GAYLUSTRE *is about to follow, when* LADY MACPHAIL *enters with* MACPHAIL.]

LADY MACPHAIL.

Madam! My boy—my poor lad—has told me of your behaviour.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

My behaviour! He loves me!

LADY MACPHAIL.

Colin!

MACPHAIL.

I thought I'd just better mention the affair to mother.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Of course; conceal nothing from your parent.

MACPHAIL.

And mother agrees with me——

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Yes?

MACPHAIL.

That it would be just a risky matter to correspond with a widow lady.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Oh!

MACPHAIL.

[*Producing* MRS. GAYLUSTRE's *card from his stocking.*] So I'm thinking I sha'n't require this address.

MRS. GAYLUSTRE.

Ah! [*She slaps his face violently and runs out.*]

EVERYBODY.

Oh!

MACPHAIL.

Mother!

[LADY MACPHAIL *embraces him. The music of the Strathspey is heard again.*]

[EGIDIA *enters.*]

EGIDIA.

The Strathspey. Come into the ball-room. What has happened?

LADY TWOMBLEY.

I can't enter the ball-room again to-night!

EARL OF DRUMDURRIS.

But you must dance the Strathspey.

LADY TWOMBLEY.

Must I? Dance then! [*They take their places for the dance.*] Pa! Valentine, Imogen! Brooke, Effie! Keith, Egidia! Lady Macphail, Sir Colin! Dance! Dance with foolish, thoughtless, weak-headed Kitty

Twombley for the last time, for to-morrow she becomes a sober, wise, happy, and contented woman! Dance!

[*They dance the Strathspey and Reel*—Sir Julian *with* Lady Twombley, Drumdurris *with* Egidia, Brooke *with* Lady Euphemia, Valentine *with* Imogen, Lady Macphail *with* Macphail. *The* Dowager *sits apart gloomily.*]

Sir Julian Twombley.

[*To* Lady Twombley *while dancing.*] You've been indiscreet again, Kitty.

Lady Twombley.

Finally, Julian, finally!

Sir Julian Twombley.

No more extravagance?

Lady Twombley.

Never! Never!

Sir Julian Twombley.

And you resign yourself to a peaceful, rural life?

Lady Twombley.

Oh!

Sir Julian Twombley.

Promise me—promise me!

Lady Twombley.

Ha, ha! Dance, pa, dance!

THE END.

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